AN ANALYSIS OF RUSSIA'S 'ALTERNATIVE' SOFT POWER STRATEGY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY DISCOURSE VIA SPORTS MEGA-EVENTS

By

NINA KRAMAREVA

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to show through both historical and contemporary examples what makes Russia an 'outlier' among key sports mega-events hosts. More specifically, this thesis sets out to establish how external and internal objectives Russia pursued in the context of the 1980 Olympics and the 2014 Sochi Olympics differed from those of other sports mega-event hosts, including non-liberal states. The originality of this thesis lies not only in the fact that it sheds light on Russia's strategy of sports mega-event hosting, but that it does so from the vantage point of the combination of the three most popular approaches in the extant sports mega-event research: public diplomacy, place branding and soft power. Moreover, this study places Russia's hosting of sports mega-events within constructivist international relations theory, which prioritises identity and interests. In this respect, this research, by uncovering Russia's motives behind sports mega-events hosting, seeks to add predictability to Russia's behaviour in the international arena. Further, this thesis shows that the pursuit of domestic soft power goals appear to be much more important to Russia than the attainment of external reputational benefits. In this respect, this thesis explores at length what role elite sport and sports mega-events play in a nation-building project in Russia and how they are used to legitimise the incumbent elites. Finally, this thesis is an attempt to overcome a Western-centric paradigmatic hegemony in sports mega-event research.

Dedication

To the few members of my family, who believed in me and helped me to persevere through this learning process. To my father, who gave me the chance to be and not to pretend. And to my incredible supervisor, Jonathan Grix, who led me to my personal Olympic gold.

Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

Address	President's Annual Address to the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation
CIS	The Commonwealth of Independent States
Concept 2016	Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation 2016
Concept 2013	Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation 2013
DOSAAF	All-Russian public-state organisation 'Volunteer Society for Cooperation with the Army, Aviation and Navy'
EU	The European Union
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
FIFA WC	FIFA World Cup
fizkultura	*fizicheskaya kultura*/physical Culture
G8	The Group of Eight -an inter-governmental political forum that brought together representatives of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia (suspended), the United Kingdom and the United States
GTO	*Gotov k Trudui I Oborone*/Ready for Labour and Defence
IIHF	International Ice Hockey Federation
Information 2014	Information for Inclusion into the Government Report to the State Duma of the Russian Federation about Results of its Work in the Sphere of Physical Culture and Sport in 2014
IOC	International Olympic Committee
Minsport	Ministry of Sport of the Russian Federation
MNC	Multi-National Corporation
NOC	National Olympic Committee
Patriotic Education Programme 2016 - 2020	Programme of Patriotic Education of Citizens of the Russian Federation for the period 2016-2020
PD	Public Diplomacy
Report 2014-2017	Report about Results and main Objectives of the Ministry of Sport of the Russian Federation for 2014-2017
Report 2015	Report about Results in 2015 and main Objectives of the Ministry of Sports of the Russian Federation in 2016-2018
Report 2016	Ministry of Sport Report about results of its

	work in 2016 and the main targets for 2017-2019
Rossotrudnichestvo	Russian federal government agency promoting Russia's soft power
Russkiy Mir	Government-funded organisation aimed at promoting Russia's soft power
Sochi Report	Sochi 2014 Official Report
SP	Soft Power
Strategy	Strategy of the Development of Physical Culture and Sport in Russian Federation in the period until 2020
The NY Times	The New York Times
WWII	World War Two
zarjadka	Morning Exercise

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the new millennium there has been an apparent migration of sports mega events (SMEs) to the developing world and Global South (Black and Westhuizen, 2004; Grix and Lee, 2013; Grix and Brannagan, 2016). To illustrate the point, in 2024 Paris will be the first Western city to host the Olympics, Winter or Summer, since the 2012 London Games (olympic.org). The situation with the FIFA World Cup (WC) is even more glaring – out of six hosts since the turn of the century, only one, Germany, represented the liberal West (fifa.com). With the exception of India, all the BRICS countries, namely Brazil, Russia, China and South Africa (Alekseyeva, 2014; Grix *et al.*, 2015; Li, 2017; Knott *et al.*, 2017) have hosted an SME in the recent past. With Russia still preparing to throw what is bound to become the grandest event in its history after the visually spectacular 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics (Makarychev and Yatsyk, 2014; Forsberg and Smith, 2016), it appears that this situation is unlikely to change much in the foreseeable future. The loss of interest to hosting SMEs in the West became particularly acute when, after the withdrawal of Rome and Budapest, and Hamburg's decision not to place a bid due to the absence of popular support (Huggler, *The Telegraph*, November 30, 2015; Roan, *BBC*, March 6, 2017) during the selection of the 2024 Olympic Games host city in September 2017, only two candidates were left to choose from. As a result, and faced with the unique situation, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) made an unprecedented decision – they awarded the 2024 Olympics to Paris and gave the 2028 Games to the other remaining bidder, Los Angeles (Rumsby, *The Telegraph*, July 31, 2017).

This sharp drop of interest in hosting SMEs in the West and a reversal of this trend on the part of the emerging states, is an indication that SMEs are unlikely to be seen as the major repositioning and re-imaging trigger anymore, in the way they were during the urban crisis in

the 1980s and a period of transition to a service-based economy during the 1990s (Harvey, 1989; Roche, 1992). Nor are they regarded a clear ideological weapon, which they were throughout most of the last century (Peppard and Riordan, 1993; Girginov, 2004). The argument made in this thesis is that at the time when advanced states with positive reputations and state-of-the art infrastructure are increasingly reluctant to host SMEs, in view of the disillusionment in the economic benefits from SMEs and little added value they see in them in terms of image gains, emerging states, on the contrary, see much developmental potential in them (Manzenreiter, 2010; Mangan *et al.*, 2011). In light of the growing interest amongst emerging states to hosting SMEs, which can neither be exhaustively explained by the urban development they stimulate, nor by the economic benefits they are said to confer, the concept of soft power (SP) has come to the forefront (Giulianotti, 2015; Grix and Brannagan, 2016). It has become the most popular explanation in academic research as to how and why developing hosts aspire to increase their agency through hosting SMEs (Grix, 2012; Grix and Lee, 2013; Arning, 2013). Other popular approaches to explaining the motivations of developing SMEs hosts are public diplomacy (PD) and place branding (Finlay and Xin, 2010; Zhou *et al.*, 2013). According to all three approaches, it is primarily the value emerging states attribute to improving their international images and augmenting reputations that sets them apart from advanced capitalist hosts, which perceive little viability in hosting SMEs after their comprehensive cost-benefit analyses (Li, 2013; Brownell, 2013). All three concepts, being highly valuable in their own right and instrumental for shedding light on the objectives of the new hosts, however, do not reflect the whole picture. This thesis posits that these concepts account only for the external dimension of SMEs hosting in the developing world. There is also an internal dimension to SMEs hosting, which includes nation-building and leadership legitimisation, for example, which might be even more important in the case of emerging, and

especially non-liberal hosts (Arning, 2013; Grix and Kramareva, 2015). Moreover, the concepts of SP, nation branding, and PD are the results of a neo-liberal course of development. This means, that although they are highly sought after in the emerging states that aspire to fit into the hegemonic world order, how they are interpreted and, accordingly, how they are pursued in the context of SMEs, differs in each particular case. This thesis endeavours to find out what exactly conditions this attractiveness of SMEs for developing states by examining Russia's practice of SMEs hosting, including the most recent 2014 Sochi Games and the 1980 Moscow Olympics.

In order to understand why Russia has been so keen on hosting SMEs, which also include the 2018 FIFA WC, and there is a string of smaller events, such as the 2013 Universiade in Kazan, the 2017 World Festival of Youth and Students, and the 2019 Universiade in Krasnoyarsk, this thesis does so from the traditional vantage point of SP, place branding and PD. None of these concepts, however, takes full account of the role SMEs play in the construction and legitimisation of national identities of the hosts. Although there are attempts to show how SMEs contribute to an intensification of the national narrative (Luo, 2010; Persson and Petersson, 2014; Alekseyeva, 2014), and there is research on how identities transpire in the process of SMEs (Arning, 2013; Scanlon, 2015), there is no research to date on how Olympic values transform the identities of the hosts. This thesis, by showing how Olympic values were internalised by the USSR in the course of the 1980 Olympic Games, demonstrates that the Olympics can not only signal what the host thinks it is and what it wants to be, but can also be transformative agents in terms of the effect they might have on a host's identity.

In order to do so, this thesis relies on the social constructivist theory of international relations (IR), that attributes equal importance to the international structure and domestic variables in a

state's identity and interests' formation process (Neumann, 1994; Hopf, 2005; 2013). According to social constructivism, identity is 'a reflection of an actor's socialisation' (Wendt, 1992, p.404). National identity, therefore, is predicated on differentiation from significant others, who at the same time embody 'the meaningful context for the self's existence and development' (Tsygankov, 2012, p.21). In line with constructivism, an actor's definition of itself necessarily mirrors behaviour and attitudes of the significant others (Zehfuss, 2001, p.326). In this respect, the 1980 Moscow Olympics and the 2014 Sochi Olympics, by putting Russia in the limelight, showed what the world really made of Russia. This thesis employs qualitative methodology to attempt to shed light both on the external and internal dimension of SMEs hosting in Russia. In the process, the thesis answers the following overarching research question:

- In what respect is Russia an 'outlier' case in hosting SMEs?

By answering the next set of sub-questions, this study offers not only a new way of understanding the objectives behind SMEs in Russia, but takes a step away from a Western-centric approach to SMEs hosting in general:

- How and why is Russian understanding of Soft Power different from Joseph Nye's (1990) initial concept?
- What role do SMEs play in the construction of a new Russian national identity?
- Can the 2014 Sochi Olympics be considered a success in terms of their Soft Power promotion/identity construction functions?

In order to comprehensively answer these research questions, following this introductory chapter, this thesis is divided into the following ten chapters:

Chapter 2 offers an analysis of the early literature on SMEs and charts the strands of research, which dominated the scholarship on the subject until the start of the new millennium. It also demonstrates the evolution of definitions of the phenomena, which also sheds light on how the research focus has shifted over time in what became known as the SMEs studies. This chapter also presents the early SMEs classification frameworks.

Chapter 3 discusses in detail the three concepts – PD, place branding, and SP – which appear to provide the most comprehensive insight into the motivations of the SMEs hosts in the post-modern world. In much of the existing literature these concepts are often used interchangeably or mis-used – this chapter goes some way to show how each concept can be used to understand state's hosting strategies. The chapter, based on the extant literature, also shows how the objectives and, thus, strategies of the emerging SMEs hosts, especially non-liberal states, may run counter to the established neo-liberal paradigm of SMEs hosting.

Chapter 4 provides an analysis of the whole system of Soviet and Russian physical culture (*fizkultura*) and sport since the formation of the communist state in the 1920s to the present day. By showing a continuity of the Russian sport system, this chapter points out which aspects are likely to be the basis of the new Russian state. It, thus, reviews an integral role of *fizkultura* and sport played in the Soviet social engineering project during the infancy of the state. In the process, it demonstrates how ritualistic characteristics of mass participation sport contributed to the manufacturing of a cult of personality. It proceeds by showing how elite sport was leveraged in the ideological confrontation during the Cold War and how its foreign policy functions evolved over time. This chapter also shows how, as the USSR joined the Olympic movement, successful athletes became national heroes and were turned into role models.

Chapter 5 presents the methodological approach and methods chosen to answer the research questions. It also explains more broadly why social constructivism is the most suitable to studying SMEs in developing countries.

Chapter 6 draws parallels between the two SMEs Russia hosted – the 1980 Moscow Olympics and the 2014 Sochi Olympics. Although thirty four years separate these events and they were hosted by different regimes – a communist and and ostensibly democratic – there appears to be a lot of similarities between them. This chapter argues that there would appear to be a case of path dependency involved in Russia's relationship with SMEs and a failure to derive maximum SP benefits from such events.

Chapter 7 shows how the neo-liberal understanding of the Sochi Olympics misses the real objectives Russia pursued. This chapter shows that Russia prioritised domestic audience in the process of hosting the Olympics rather than targeted the world at large.

Chapter 8 discusses the external dimension of the SMEs in Russia, or what version of itself Russia wanted to show the world and how this effort was received. The effect of Russia's re-imaging effort is analysed on the basis of the comparative analysis of the British and US press reviewing the Moscow and the Sochi Olympic Ceremonies. The Western press was chosen here because Russia sees the USA and Britain, as is shown in chapter 8, as its significant others. What this implies, is that the Western reaction to Russia's Olympics not only signalled how Russia is perceived in the West, but importantly triggered further modifications in its national narrative. This chapter importantly points out what Russia views as its main competitive advantages and points of attraction and shows what the West thinks of them.

Chapter 9 represents an internal dimension of Russia's SMEs hosting. That is, this chapter, on the basis of thematic analysis of the state documents and interviews with the Russian sports officials and figures of influence, demonstrates what role *fizkultura* and sport in general and SMEs hosting in particular play in what could be broadly described as nation-building in Russia.

Chapter 10 represents an analysis of the SP strategy Russia pursued in the context of the Sochi Olympic Games. This chapter is also based on the interview findings and the state documents analysis. To add another important dimension to how Russia's reimaging and SP effort is received, the findings are presented here from the separate interviews which were conducted with the sports officials from Ukraine. This offers a valuable insight as Ukraine is the country which Russia, despite the current conflict, sees as the sphere of its strategic interests. Finally, the chapter offers an analysis of Russia's sports diplomacy in the present day and age.

Chapter 11 gives a brief summary of the thesis's findings, its contribution to knowledge and its implications. It also acknowledges the limitations of this study and suggests further directions of SMEs research.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE GENERAL LITERATURE ON SPORTS MEGA-EVENTS

2.1 Introduction

Sports mega-events have become a symbol of post-modernity; they form a lens through which a great deal of socio-economic, cultural and political tendencies, and transformations at both the global and nation-state levels, have become observable. They vividly reveal all strengths and weaknesses, potential, and aspirations of the societies and the political regimes of the hosts. They also demonstrate the ability of sport to transcend disciplinary boundaries and enrich previously unconnected fields of inquiry. In Roche's words (1992, p.581):

> This range of practical, socio-cultural and economic aspects of mega-events implies that the proper study of them cannot be said to fall neatly into the sphere of any single discipline or perspective.

Indeed, the study of the impact and legacy of SMEs has permeated a wide range of social sciences, ranging from IR to linguistics and geography.

This chapter is divided into two distinct parts. The first section is dedicated to an analysis of the early literature until the year 2000 when SMEs research began burgeoning into a fully-fledged academic field. The second section presents the evolution of the definitions and the terminology, alongside the methodological weaknesses that are acknowledged. It also includes examples of first categorisation typology and a periodisation framework. Finally, the overriding themes and research problems are established, paving the way for more substantial and systematic studies, reviewed in chapter 3.

2.2 Early Research

Nowadays, there is a huge variety of international sporting competitions. However, only two events are uniformly considered to be 'mega': the FIFA World Cup and the Summer Olympic Games (Grix and Lee, 2013). Due to the fact that the study of SMEs is a comparatively nascent scientific field, up until the late 1990s there was a vague methodological framework regarding what could be considered as an SME. This situation was further exacerbated by there being little consensus on the definition.

SMEs trace their origins to the International Expos of the 19th-century and early 20th-century, where the structure and framework of the modern mass spectacle emerged and its role in the global political economy started to be defined (Roche, 1998). This was an era when empires sought to showcase their technological and industrial accomplishments which, by reflecting interstate industrial rivalry, contributed to power and status anxieties in a strictly stratified international system. Initially envisaged to be a part of the World Fairs, the Olympic Games proved to be far more enduring an institution than the imperial forces engendering them.

Being at the nexus of a wide range of social sciences, SME research has been growing exponentially since the 1990s, developing into a separate field in the late 2000s. A publishing boom, however, took place amidst the lack of methodological clarity and relied on contradictory terminology (Ritchie, 1984; Roche, 1992; Getz, 1997). Therefore, while almost unanimously identifying an acute need for common theoretical ground to institutionalise research and clarify agendas, academics continued to use varying definitions and classifications of the same phenomena, depending on the objectives of their own research and based on their own understanding. The most extensively used terms with reference to large sporting events were 'special events' (Jago and Shaw, 1998, 2000), 'hallmark events' (Ritchie, 1984; Getz, 1989; Boyle, 1997), 'mega-events' (Roche, 2000; Getz, 2008; Law,

1993), and quite recently ‘giga events’ (Muller, 2015). This prevailing practice of deploying varying definitions, alongside an uncoordinated effort across SME research streams and amongst practitioners, complicates the advancement of theoretical knowledge and impedes the development and realisation of informed SME leveraging strategies. The following table represents a comparative list of definitions and the evolution of their focus:

Term	Definition	Focus
‘Hallmark Event’ Ritchie (1984, p. 2)	‘Major one-time or recurring events of limited duration, developed primarily to enhance the awareness, appeal and profitability of a tourism destination in the shirt and/or long term’	The first attempt of a ‘total impact’ and cost-benefit research based on a longitudinal approach. Addressed six types of impact: Tourism/commercial Physical Socio-cultural Psychological Political Possible benefits may include: Socio-Cultural: increase in permanent level of local interest and participation in type of activity associated with event; strengthening of regional traditions and values. Psychological: increased local pride and community spirit; increased awareness of non-local perception. Political: propagation of political values held by government and/or population. Possible negative impacts may be: Socio-Cultural: commercialisation of activities which may be of a personal or private nature;

Term	Definition	Focus
'Hallmark Event' Ritchie (1984, p. 2)	'Major one-time or recurring events of limited duration, developed primarily to enhance the awareness, appeal and profitability of a tourism destination in the shirt and/or long term'.	modification of nature of event/activity to accommodate tourism. Psychological: tendency towards defensive attitudes concerning host regions; high possibility of misunderstandings leading to varying degrees of host/ visitor hostility. Political: economic exploitation of local population to satisfy ambitions of political elite; distortion of true nature of event to reflect values of political system of the day (Ritchie, 1984 cited in Roche, 1992, p.578)
'Mega Event' Getz (in Fayos-Sola, 1998, p. 242)	'Planned occurrences of limited duration which have an extraordinary impact on the host area in terms of one or more of the following; tourism volumes; visitor expenditures; publicity leading to a heightened awareness and a more positive image; related infrastructural and organisational developments which substantially increase the destination's capacity and attractiveness'	Portfolio approach to establish a long-term attractiveness and competitiveness of a place as a tourist destination
'Mega Event' Law (1993, p.)	'large events of world importance and high profile which have a major impact on the image of the host city'.	Urban re-imaging, tourism
'Hallmark Event' civic boosterism school in Waitt (2001, p.249)	'hallmark events are an instrument of hegemonic power, conceived to generate feelings of enthusiasm for community and national pride in an era noted for its culture of nihilism'	Civic boosterism, socio-polarisation

Term	Definition	Focus
'Mega Event' Roche (2000, p. 1)	'Large-scale, cultural (including commercial and sporting) events, which have a dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance'	Urban planning, urban tourism, post-crisis city regeneration, urban re-imaging
'Hallmark Event' Getz (2005, p. 16)	'an event that possesses such significance, in terms of tradition, attractiveness, quality, or publicity, that the event provides the host venue, community, or destination with a competitive advantage.'	Image making, place marketing and destination branding, event tourism
'Hallmark Event' vs. 'Mega Event' Getz (2008, p. 408)	'Mega events are typically global in their orientation and require a competitive bid to 'win' them as a one-time event for a particular place. By contrast, 'hallmark events' cannot exist independently of their host community, and 'local' or 'regional' events are by definition rooted in one place and appeal mostly to residents.'	Event management, maximisation of a destination's attractiveness
'Mega Event' Muller (2015, p.3)	'ambulatory occasions of a fixed duration that (a) attract a large number of visitors, (b) have large mediated reach, (c) come with large costs and (d) have large impacts on the built environment and the population'	Visitor attractiveness, mediated reach, costs and transformative impact. Muller lists only two events as 'giga': the FIFA World Cup and the Summer Olympic Games

Table 1: Evolution of Definitions

The literature on the political dimensions of SMEs and on leveraging legacies generally interprets SMEs in line with the comprehensive and operative definition offered by Getz (cited in Fayos-Sola, 1998, p. 242), which is as follows:

> Planned occurrences of limited duration which have an extraordinary impact on the host area in terms of one or more of the following; tourism volumes; visitor expenditures; publicity leading to a heightened awareness and a more positive image;

> related infrastructural and organisational developments which substantially increase the destination's capacity and attractiveness.

Another often cited and more succinct definition belongs to Roche (2001, p.2). According to him, SMEs are:

> Large-scale, cultural (including commercial and sporting) events, which have a dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance.

Event studies have been revolutionised through a critical mass of uncoordinated publications mired in confusing terminology and definitional ambiguity. The term 'event studies' was introduced by Donald Getz during 'The Events Beyond 2000' conference, which took place in July 2000 in Sydney and signified the emergence of a new systematic approach to SMEs studies in particular (Australian Centre for Event Management, 2000). Furthermore, the year 2000 marked an unstated shift in terminology, when sports events such as the Olympics and the FIFA World Cup, 'formerly called hallmark events' (Hiller, 2000, p.439), started to be called mega.

Up until the early 2000s, the parallel use of the terms hallmark and mega-event was common, with little clarity as to where the distinction lay inasmuch as some academics used them interchangeably, whilst others saw one as a subcategory of the other (Jago and Shaw, 2000). The hierarchical causation, however, was not apparent. Jago and Shaw, for example, considered mega and hallmark events as a subcategory of major events, whereas Hall (1989) placed mega-events within the hallmark category. Roche (1992) did not distinguish between the types of mega-events and grouped the Olympics with Garden Festivals and Cultural Festivals.

Jago and Shaw (2000), thus favouring the term special event, reiterated the importance of a standardised terminology and an appropriate common lexicon. They came up with one of the first categorisations of the attributes and defining features of a special event, which include:

- Tourism attractiveness;
- Limited duration;
- One-off or infrequent character;
- Media attention;
- Large economic impact;
- Contribution to the awareness or image profile of the region;
- Uniqueness and extraordinary character.

Despite the obvious value of this categorisation, acknowledged in subsequent studies, the apparent methodological limitation lies in the piling up of impacts, such as the economic impact and the branding potential of special events with their intrinsic attributes. Whereas the impacts rely on the whole set of complex interrelationships between the various stakeholders in a specific context and thus are dependant variables, intrinsic attributes are the primary reason why the events are sought in the first place due to their legendary ability to leave positive legacies. In this respect, Ritchie's (1984) six types of event impacts, namely economic, tourism/commercial, physical, socio-cultural, psychological and political, for a long time were considered to be exhaustive. This framework, although more holistic due to the inclusion of soft effects, still reflects their arbitrary and accidental nature rather than one rooted in systematic strategic planning and implementation.

Jago and Shaw (2000) should also be credited with developing a coherent hierarchical model of special events, where mega-events feature as a sub-category of major events along with

hallmark events (see Figure 1). The authors see the presence of apparent differences amongst the concepts, yet place the Commonwealth Games, which in later typologies are considered to be either a regional event or second-order mega-event, alongside the Olympics within the category of mega-events. To them, the categorisation of mega-events or the unification of the terminology was seen as meaningful and worthwhile for the simplification of consumer choices and event marketing purposes. However, its indispensability for further multidimensional in-depth research was not recognised.

Jago and Shaw (2000) use the broad term of special events to encompass all types of events including small community-based festivals and major events, covering hallmark and mega-events. Although they list the attributes, which they consider to be phenomena defining, they do not elaborate on the key distinctions between hallmark and mega-events (see Figure 1).

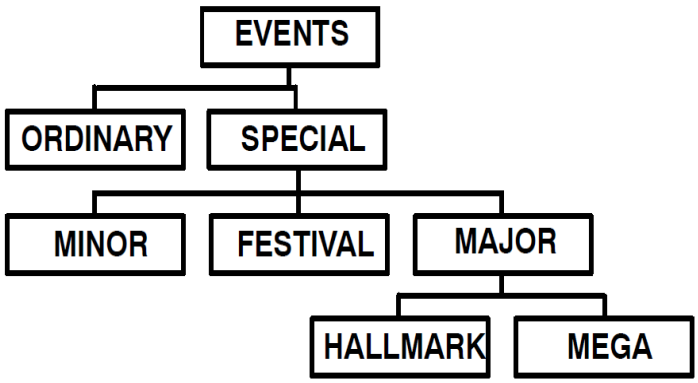


Figure 1: Diagrammatic Event Framework (Source: Jago and Shaw, 2000, p.4)

Hall (1989, p.263) considers events with a broad range of purposes and versatile target audiences, such as 'fairs, festivals, expositions, cultural and sporting events', as hallmark. For him, to qualify as a 'hallmark', an event must satisfy two prerequisite conditions: to be major, although Hall does not specify the dimensions and scope, and to possess an international

status. In terms of the main objective of hallmark events, like the majority of pioneers of research in the field, he sees the achievement of 'high prominence in the tourist market place' for the host (ibid). As a result, the focus of Hall's work is place promotion, whilst the functionality of hallmark events is seen in terms of tourism boosterism.

Place marketing and the promotion of positive destination images alongside urban renewal facilitation are listed by Getz (1989; 2000), who also belongs to the event tourism research camp, as the main functions of SMEs. According to his typology of events, based on their functionality, mega-events represent a separate and more prominent category than hallmark events. With regard to SMEs' value in generating all types of benefits for the hosts, Getz (ibid) calls for a comprehensive portfolio of events instead of relying on hugely overrated mega-events alone.

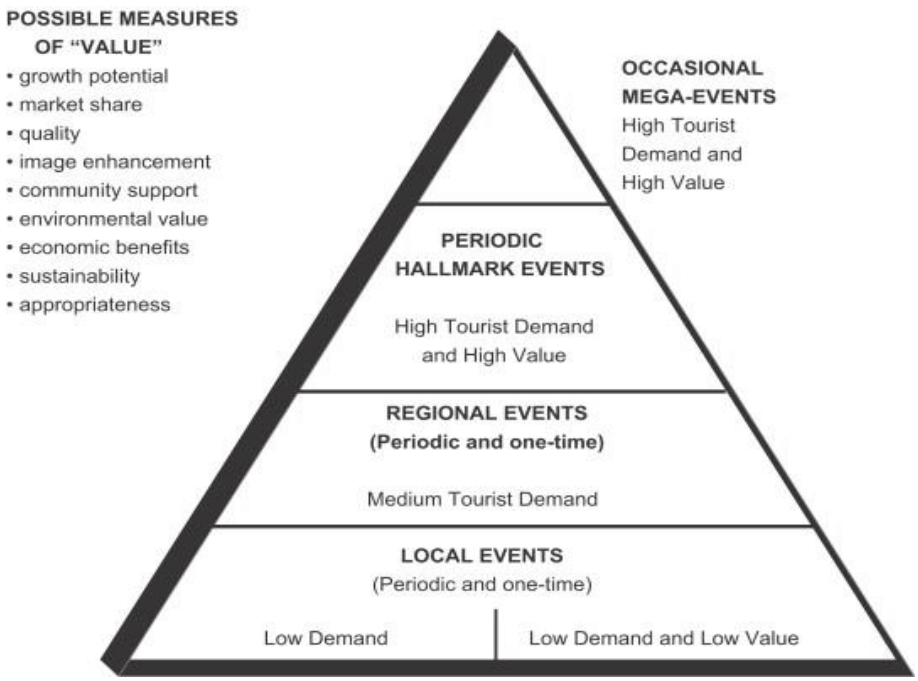


Figure 2: The Portfolio Approach to Event Tourism Strategy-Making and Evaluation (Source: Getz, 2005)

Roche (1994), in addition to tourism growth, recognises two other potential positive outcomes from SMEs: industrial relocation and inward investment. Despite acknowledging a broad spectrum of the impacts of SMEs, he agrees that contemporary research values them in terms of tourism enhancement. He also identifies two approaches to the analysis of the causes and rationale for staging SMEs: political and planning. From a planning perspective, he posits that SMEs could be a catalyst for city regeneration in a post-industrial, post-modern world. He warns, however, referring to the Neo-Marxist view of planning, that urban reconstruction runs the risk of system legitimisation while intensifying non-inclusive practices and societal divisions. Overall, condemning an ‘‘autocratic’’ pattern of decision making’ (ibid, p.6) and the lack of justified rationality in bidding for SMEs, inasmuch as the fact that no feasibility studies are usually conducted, he supports the view of re-imaging the city through hosting SMEs as a counterbalance to the de-industrialisation crisis of the 1990s. He also sees the need for a comparative analysis of the host cities and SMEs, as well as acknowledging a growing necessity for the development of ‘the theoretical and explanatory understanding of the relation between various types of large touristic events’ (ibid, p.14).

The impact of the Olympic Games on the urban landscape was fully acknowledged by Essex and Chalkley (1998), who conceptualised the Olympics as ‘major hallmark events’, which involve large, predominantly infrastructural investment, leaving a substantial imprint on the urban landscape. The central value of their work is seeing the Olympics as a potent instrument of urban policy and a catalyst of urban renewal; they were the first to provide a comprehensive analysis of the effects of the Games in the 1896-1996 time period on the built environments of the hosts. In the same way as a number of academics at that time (Roche, 1994; Law, 1993; Hiller, 2000), they see the Olympics and their socio-economic role from the perspective of post-Fordism and globalisation, which to them makes the Olympic project

legitimate only as part of a broad urban re-development agenda. As a result, offering a valuable categorisation scheme of SMEs based on the urban imprint criteria, they still simplistically see the main objective of SMEs to be economic growth and urban change.

Fayos-Sola (1998), in addition to articulating a need for standardisation in institutional settings for SMEs and for the accumulation of knowledge of the factors, which influence SMEs production and consumption processes, lists the motivations of the decision makers behind such events. They include (Fayos Sola, 1998, p. 243):

- Short-term market benefits;
- Long-term effects (achieving competitiveness for a destination);
- Political gamble (popularity with constituencies).

The usual undemocratic character of Olympic decision making, involving little public consultation, was widely condemned at the early stages of SMEs research (Hall, 1989; Roche, 1994; Kidd, 1992). Harvey (1989), however, claims that the Olympic-associated investment runs the risk of not only accentuating social inequalities, but also intensifying urban problems through increased taxes, gentrification, and the displacement of communities. Moreover, Harvey (1989) highlights the phenomenon of 'urban spectacle' in an attempt by cities to become entrepreneurial, proactive, and to redefine themselves in a transition period. The change of the macroeconomic climate and the shift in the developmental paradigm requires astute public-private partnerships, which was particularly apparent during the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. This argument is in accordance with Roche's (1992, p.564) 'new urban tourism' concept, where SMEs feature prominently. Likewise, Roche (ibid) suggests the development of a macro-level and micro-level analysis of SMEs contexts to generate a better-informed

strategy, which should include the broader political and national aspects as well as the urban and tourist constructs.

Roche (1998) posits that SMEs are part of a perfectly new modern public sphere, which significantly contributes to national self-identification and nation-building processes. He also distinguishes between three types of national socio-political self-determination, which were taking shape at the time and were in line with the public theatre context that subsequently defined the geopolitical tensions of the 20th century. These types are mono-cultural ethnically/racially 'pure' societies (Germany, Japan), 'multi-national' societies (USA, Australia, Canada), and 'super-national' empires (Britain, France) (ibid, p.4). Roche (1998) also draws attention to the risk of overlooking externalities in the analysis of national identity formation and nation building. This is in line with the argument of the social identity theory proponents of IR (social constructivists), who elevate the importance of relevant others (dissociative reference groups versus associative) in national self-identification.

Kidd (1992) contributes to the scant literature on the cultural and political dimensions of SMEs. Using the example of the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games, he emphasises that the event impacts should not be evaluated in isolation, but rather through taking into account the wider political and socio-economic realities. In the same way that the Barcelona Olympics were considered to be an impressive success, the Montreal Games are held up as a quintessential example of woeful mismanagement and an inability to capitalise on the momentum. Kidd, however, argues that despite the alignment of a number of unfavourable circumstances such as global inflation, international recession, local opposition, and technical and construction problems (Essex and Chalkley, 1998), most of Montreal's issues could be attributed to nationalistic and cultural conflicts within the country in general and the political

elites in particular. The Montreal Olympic Games were overshadowed by the contesting identities of Canadians, coming to the fore on the eve of the Olympics.

Kidd's (1992) work exemplifies the centrality of inclusive national identity not only for staging a successful Olympic Games, but also for leaving a sustainable and positive legacy. This has become an issue of particular importance nowadays in light of the far from homogeneous national makeup of the new developing host countries. The Montreal case is a telling testimony to the fact that the Games cannot only provide an impetus for national identity consolidation (Law, 1994; Hiller, 2000), or serve as the birthplace of an inspirational national idea, but can also be an instrument of ethnic division, leading to national polarisation. Montreal, like Barcelona, has been strongly motivated by a national sentiments and a desire to demonstrate its distinctiveness from the rest of the country, although this issue is traditionally overlooked in the research. However, unlike Barcelona, Montreal became hostage to conflicting national visions and Federalist-separatist/English-French tensions. Contributing to the literature on SMEs' social discrimination capacity, Kidd's study highlights a new aspect to this topic, namely the amplification of national antagonisms.

The potential of unsuccessful bids to spur urban regeneration projects or 'the legacy and effect of bidding and failing' (Essex and Chalkley, 1998, p.204) was recognised in the late 1990s. Law (1994, p.231) investigates how Manchester's bid for the 2000 Olympic Games, being 'complementary to existing strategies and not an alternative', attracted government funds that were essential to spurring on the image of modernisation. Among other intangible benefits were a better rapport among city elites, a paradigm change to a world-class urban competitive city, and a surge of civic pride; it also generated publicity to attract the investment. The Cape Town unsuccessful bid for the 2004 Olympic Games, on the other

hand, is conceptualised as an opportunity to promote human development and urban transformation (Hiller, 2000). In addition to highlighting how the bids are used to divert attention from elitist political objectives and attain public support, the authors also acknowledge the dual character of a bid's legitimisation, which is either ideological or based on functional attributes, and the projected hard benefits.

2.3 Typological Frameworks

The academic aspiration for some sort of periodisation typology of the Olympic Games or categorisation based on a definite impact found expression in two worthwhile frameworks. Shoval's (2002) chronological typology was developed around the criteria of cities' bidding dispositions; it consists of four distinct consecutive stages. The first one lasts until the 1936 Nazi Games and is characterised by the evolution of the Games into a potent symbolic medium, which it continues to be. The second stage begins with the first post-war Austerity Games in London in 1948 and extends up until the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. This was a time when the interest of the cities in the Olympic Games fluctuated due, among other broader socio-economic considerations, to the woeful instances of politically motivated bloodshed (Munich 1972) and commercial and planning disasters (Montreal 1976). Interest reached its lowest point after the boycotted 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow. The Los Angeles Games of 1984 marked a shift towards public-private partnerships in staging the Olympics and the first significant commercial success, estimated at approximately $232.5 million in net profit (Wilson, 2015, p.145). The third stage lasted until the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney and signalled a rejuvenated enthusiasm in the cities to bid for the Games as an attempt to excel in inter-urban competition. The fourth, the current stage, is a period of extreme commercialisation and politisation of the Olympic Games. By contrast, Essex and Chalkley's (1998, p.192) typology of the Olympic Games is based on urban impact criteria

and is ‘therefore, organised around the scale of the changes the various games initiated, rather than on a strictly chronological basis.’ The first category is characterised by minimum spending and, thus, minor infrastructural and urban transformations (ibid). The second category is defined by the insignificant makeover of the urban landscape and infrastructural developments, alongside the continuing construction of sports stadia and facilities. Finally, the third category comprises the Games generating substantial urban redevelopments and infrastructural renewals, and as a result, leaving mostly positive hard legacies for the host (for the complete framework and a full list of transformations see Table 2).

Category (scale of urban impact)	**Cities**	**Urban Imprint**
‘Low Impact’ Games	Athens, 1896 Paris, 1900 St Louis, 1904	Some new and refurbished venues (overall very low impact)
	London, 1948 Mexico, 1968 Los Angeles, 1984	Modest changes, reliance on existing infrastructure
‘Medium Impact’ Games	London, 1908 Stockholm, 1912	New specialist facilities for separate sports
	Los Angeles, 1932	New substantial stadium, first Olympic Village
	Berlin, 1936	A new stadium, a swimming pool, an open air theatre, a sports forum, a large House of German Sports, an Olympic Village

Category (scale of urban impact)	Cities	Urban Imprint
'Medium Impact' Games	Helsinki, 1952	Sporting venues and Olympic Villages, later turned into residential areas
	Melbourne, 1956	
	Atlanta, 1996	Olympic Stadium, Aquatic Centre, Centennial Olympic Park
'High Impact' Games	Rome, 1960	Modern municipal water supply system, airport, improvements to the city and environment, sport facilities
	Tokyo, 1964	Road improvements, harbour development, accommodation projects, sewage system, water supply, public heath improvements ($2.7 bn on infrastructural development)
	Munich, 1972	Olympic Village, turned into affordable housing; pedestrianisation of the historic quarter; underground car parking; improvement of public transport; three new expressways, hotels, shopping centre
	Montreal, 1976	Extension of subway system, new roads, airport, hotel
	Moscow, 1980	12 new, 13 renovated sports facilities, Novosty Press Agency, Olympic Communications Centre, Olympic Television and Radio Centre
	Seoul, 1988	New subway lines, airport enlargement, devolution of Han River, provision of higher health and hygiene standards; Seoul Arts Centre, National Museum of Contemporary Arts
	Barcelona, 1992	Restructuring of the rail network, building of a coastal ring road, Olympic Harbour, regeneration of the coastline, modernisation of the sewage system

Table 2: Typological Framework (Source: Essex and Chalkley, 1998)

This early typologisation attempts to exhibit the potential multiplicity of the systematic and comparative analyses of SMEs, although being rooted in different criteria and rationale.

Shoval's (2002) classification, for example, is strictly chronological and involves bidding intensification as a defining variable, whereas Essex and Chalkley's framework is based on the scale of urban impact. On the whole, these two frameworks offer a good template for the development of other informative typologies, constructed around socio-economic and political determinants.

2.4 Conclusion

Pioneering research on SMEs is dedicated to the intensification of their role in urban transformation dynamics in the context of the transition to a post-modern society, shaped by post-Fordist thinking and globalisation challenges. Amongst the values of the early studies is that they draw attention to the potential of integrating the Olympic Games into city branding and re-imaging strategies in such a way as to ameliorate the de-industrialisation crisis of the 1990s that raged across Europe. Barcelona was the first city to modernise its image and conduct an exemplary re-development and beautification scheme as a part of the Olympic project. Later studies also identify such cities as Atlanta, Sydney, and Turin, which with varying degree of success, succumbed to the same logic of urban boosterism and targeted image promotion through hosting the Olympic Games. However, the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona remain a quintessential success case. Embracing new identities in the process, cities were eager to incorporate the SME hosting experience into their post-modern urban mythmaking.

Overall, the early research on SMEs is plagued by simplistic economic and functionalist analyses of SMEs, with little attention being given to their wider socio-cultural dimensions. The overriding issues raised in the burgeoning literature on SMEs in the late 1990s were the fallacy and/or political use of ad hoc economic feasibility studies, as well as an absence of comprehensive multidisciplinary post hoc analyses. These widespread concerns triggered an

academic paradigm shift from a positivistic perspective, focusing on quantifiable variables, which is characteristic of an impact and not a legacy approach to the phenomena, to a 'total impact analysis' (Roche, 1992, p.576) alongside the broader contextualisation of SMEs as agents of socio-economic change at the macro and micro levels, and as a compelling political instrument.

The expansion of SMEs studies in the 2000s took place alongside the growing academic interest in the political economy of SMEs. Substantial increases in the scope of SMEs research and in the number of publications could be, to some extent, attributed to the extension of the SME market, now firmly incorporating the BRICS countries and South-East Asia. New players in the market sparked an academic inquiry into their primary motives, agendas, and SMEs legacies in the new contexts. These motives, in turn, are increasingly explained by their propensity to seek reputational benefits. A review of the pertaining literature is provided in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses three concepts – PD, place branding, and SP – that appear to provide the most comprehensive insights into the motivations of the hosts of SMEs in the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century . In much of the existing literature, these concepts are often used interchangeably or are mis-used; this chapter goes some way towards showing how each concept can be used to understand a state's hosting strategies. The first section of this chapter discusses how SMEs are used to garner PD benefits. It addresses the role played by the media in the context of SMEs and introduces the different models of PD that states use in the run-up to SMEs. The second part addresses the question of why the SMEs hosts view the events as opportunities for place branding and nation branding. It also introduces the concept of Competitive Identity. Finally, the third section of this chapter charts the relationship between SP projection and SMEs. The last section also shows how the objectives and, thus, the strategies of the emerging SMEs hosts, especially in non-liberal states, might run counter to the established neo-liberal paradigm of SMEs hosting.

3.2 PD and Mega-Events

It is incontrovertibly true that SMEs are highly politicised occurrences (Berg *et al.*, 2012; Freeman, 2012), which convey ideological messages and serve several strategic functions designated to them by the host state's leadership (Black, 2008; Cho and Bairner, 2011). Whilst those messages and functions will be exhaustively discussed throughout the thesis, they receive only a brief mention here. Thus, the USSR in the context of the 1980 Moscow Olympics vied to celebrate what it saw as an undisputed superiority of the socialist order and display its greatest attainments – that is the friendship of the nations and the Soviet person (*Izvestiia*, 'Grand opening of the XXII Summer Olympic Games in Moscow', July 20, 1980,

p.1; Austin, *The New York Times*, 4 August, p.1, p.4). In the meantime, among the strategic functions it pursued were debunking of the Western 'conspiracy' to portray is as an aggressor and a threat to universal peace (*Pravda*, 'The flame of peace and friendship shines over Moscow', 20 July, p.1). Effectively, the USSR sought to return the favour and paint the Wester boycotters as the real troublemakers undermining the integrity of the IOC movement. In 1984, during the Olympic Games in LA, the USA aimed to achieve much the same, albeit championing the infinite advantages of capitalism (Berg et *al*., 2012; Moretti, 2013). In the case of the 1988 Seoul Olympics ideological messaging was almost absent, except for the implicit distancing from the communist North; all the emphasis shifted to signalling the country's modernity and democratic choice (Black and Westhuizen, 2004; Mangan and Park, 2011). During the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona, ideology for a brief period gave way to pragmatism (Preuss, 2007; Oettler, 2015). As a result, regional competitiveness and post-industrial revitalisation took the lead among the local elites' priorities. The 2008 Beijing Olympics, on the contrary, although signalled China's commitment to peaceful and sustainable development, became a visual claim for China's ascendancy in the international system (Luo, 2010; Brownell, 2013).

According to Mangan (2010, p.2337), sport and SMEs are strong 'geopolitical instruments of persuasion' or simply put, PD is safe from political failure (Carter and Sugden, 2012, p. 106). Therefore, a theory of PD with its instruments and models could provide a useful perspective through which to analyse the political dimensions of SMEs and to locate them within international relations (IR) scholarship (Cha, 2009; Manheim, 1990; Xifra, 2009).

Whilst highly multidisciplinary and benefiting greatly from being at the crossroads of a number of sciences, PD is often erroneously seen merely as an elaborate expression of

propaganda, international public relations, psychological warfare, or public affairs (Gilboa, 2008). The term is also often used interchangeably with SP and, in some instances, with place branding (Cull, 2010). Public diplomacy, the primary concern of which is the development of collective opinion abroad (Wang, 2005; Staar, 1986), has been relatively receptive to influences emanating from the social sciences: public relations (PR), communication studies, and marketing in particular (Gilboa, 2008). The needs it serves, however, are largely rooted in politics (Melissen, 2005).

The term PD was originally coined by Edmund Gullion in the 1960s in order to contrast the US government's international communications programme with historically tarnished and vilified propaganda (Gregory, 2008; Cull, 2010). Public diplomacy encompassed all state information, education, and culture specifically intended for foreign publics and imported for their consumption (Gregory, 2008). Public diplomacy at that time was understood as a governmental communication activity aimed 'to accomplish the goals of their foreign policy by engaging with foreign publics' (Cull, 2008, p.31). It held that through shaping and influencing the attitudes and opinions of foreign publics, a state would subsequently ensure the more favourable behaviour of the respective governments (Gilboa, 2008).

Since the mid-1960s, this nascent paradigm shift in political thought has started to have an effect on the motives and mechanisms of SMEs hosting. There was already an evident attempt made by the hosts to address the world even before the concept of PD came into use. Starting within the 1960 Rome Olympics, states that were previously infamous for their propaganda, such as Japan in 1964 and Germany in 1972, particularly relied on the Olympic Games as a PD vehicle to convince the world of their new identities (Collins, 2007; Modrey, 2008;

Maraniss, 2008; Horton and Saunders, 2012; Guthrie-Shimizu, 2013). Indeed, the hosting of the Olympics by former axis powers shows that they were amongst the first to understand that

> public diplomacy is not propaganda. And it is not government diplomacy… Public diplomacy is diplomacy of public opinion, that is, the projection of the values and ideas of the public onto the international sphere (Castells, 2008, p.91).

Regarding the unashamed exploitation of SMEs for propaganda purposes, the 1936 Summer Olympic Games in Berlin represent the most striking example. Setting a technological standard for staging the Games, the Nazi regime did so at a staggering price, with the stadium cost alone exceeding the initial calculations by thirty times (Kruger and Murray, 2003). It was, however, the unprecedented level and cost of ideological augmentation in the Olympics, meant to lure 'regions and states that were politically, militarily and geo-strategically interesting more deeply into the sphere of German influence' (Bonde, 2009, p.1460), that set the precedent for international 'cultural propaganda by totalitarian states' (ibid, p.1459). In this respect, the 1936 Berlin Olympics in their primary function, designated by the Nazi leadership, bear a dubious resemblance to the practice of bidding and hosting SMEs in several modern non-liberal states (Brownell, *The Huffington Post*, August 2, 2008; Yardley, *The New York Times*, August 8, 2008). Despite the fact that the Nazi Games precedent could in theory teach the publics an illuminating lesson about the potential ulterior motives of future hosts and the dangers of the acquiescence of the watching world, the role of the Berlin Olympic Games in reinforcing the politics of appeasement and abetting Germany's subsequent unimpeded military aggression has not received due attention in the historical and IR scholarship.

Whereas it was traditionally understood that PD was practised by the civilised part of the world and the Soviets spread propaganda (Cull, 2010), both propaganda and PD strive to

achieve a comparable result. The fundamental difference between the two concepts lies in the treatment of the foreign audience, the targeted level of public engagement, and accordingly, the methods and instruments adopted (Evans and Steven, 2010; Staar, 1986; Berg *et al.*, 2012). In contrast to propaganda, which is traditionally a one-dimensional proclamation of self-contained politicised truths habitually divorced from reality (Staar, 1986), the messages of governments engaged in PD allegedly come from listening to their publics. The central point here is that PD not only mirrors the standpoint and intent of an interested party; it also takes into account the opinions, aspirations, and values of its audience (Cowan and Arsenault, 2008). This also implies that dialogue and cooperation are the modes of communication (Cull, 2010) that have succeeded the one-dimensional monologue, which was the only palpable way of addressing foreign publics under propaganda (Nickles and Paull, 2003). What sets PD apart from 'propaganda, lobbying, and public relations', in the main, is 'a focus on relationship building at every level' (Cowan and Arsenault, 2008, p.11).

The Basic Cold War model of PD, which was in use until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Gilboa, 2008), was seen by the states' elites as a comprehensive and representative reputation-building medium, to counter the adversary's efforts to portray a dogmatic, angled, and often demonised picture of them. It was around that time that sport started to be considered as a transnational phenomenon that not only helps to achieve political goals that defy interventions from traditional statecraft, but is also a distinctive discipline that defines an international system in ways more substantial than those generally acknowledged (Mangan and Gwang, 2011; Murray, 2012). Philpott (2016, p.4) explains why states embrace sport as a diplomatic tool:

> As a means of achieving foreign policy goals sports diplomacy has a range of attractions for governments, including the growing international profile, power and

> mass appeal of sport and the belief that sport has a unique soft-power capacity for bringing together estranged communities.

The Olympic Games of the Cold War era, in view of the comparatively limited opportunities for unimpeded cultural exchanges between ordinary people from opposite sides of the Iron Curtain, although still showcasing the ‘‘official’’ versions of public culture’ (Manzenreiter, 2010, p.32), represented the most effective and credible PD arena or a venue for ‘unobtrusive forms of propaganda’ (Riordan, 1974, p.322). There are two equally valid opinions about the role of the Olympic Games at that time. According to Mangan (2012, p. 2277), the Olympics ‘for decades [were] the equivalent of an ideological beauty contest between capitalist west and communist east, both vying to look as if they were offering their citizens the better, fairer way of life’. Mechikoff (1984, p.23), by contrast, equates the foreign policy functions of the Olympic Games during the Cold War with no less than a sublimation of an armed conflict:

> From a contemporary political perspective, the Olympic Games are a confrontation between the democratic nations, led by the United States, and the Communist bloc, with the Soviet Union at the helm. While direct military confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union would inevitably destroy the earth as we know it, both superpowers sponsor ‘limited’ military encounters to establish or maintain ideological positions through allies and potential allies. As an ongoing process of media confrontation, the propaganda war vacillates from the monotonous to the mundane. Only one avenue of direct physical confrontation is not only sanctioned by the entire global political community, but actively promoted: the Olympic Games.

With the USSR joining the Olympic Movement, the 1952 Olympic Games in Helsinki are sometimes identified as the first dramatic ideological confrontation of the Cold War, which simultaneously finalised the world’s division into two blocs (Riordan, 1974). The political role of athletes at that time, unequalled before or ever since in history, has been embraced by the term diplomats in tracksuits (Holzweissig, 1981; Mertin, 2009; Balbier, 2009). The term refers to East German sportsmen and women, who were seen as soldiers of sport, whilst elite

sport was understood on both sides of the Atlantic as a modern form of 'psychological warfare' (Riordan, 1974, p.322). Public diplomacy from that time onwards has called for sports assistance for two major reasons. The first one is to engender rapprochement and resolve any impasse in official relations between the countries by appealing to the universal apolitical human values encompassed by sport (Hong and Sun, 2000; Sakaedani, 2005; Cha, 2013). This was a popular tactic during the Cold War exemplified by several high-profile cases of Ping-Pong diplomacy between China and the USA in 1971 (Wang, 2003), and an attempt to repeat its success through baseball diplomacy between the USA and Cuba (Carter, 2011). The other objective was to demonstrate the denunciation of a hostile political and ideological worldview, most vividly illustrated by the US-led boycott of the 1980 Olympics in Moscow, and the Kremlin returning the favour in the context of the 1984 Olympic Games in LA (Berg *et al.*, 2012; Moretti, 2013; Jefferys, 2016). Several nations who allegedly violated the accepted norms of behaviour were banned from participation (Balbier, 2009).

The legacy of the series of exchanges between the US and Chinese table tennis teams in 1971 and 1972, which became known as 'Ping-Pong diplomacy' (Keech, 2000), is that this helped to thaw relations between the two adversaries and paved the way for the Nixon-Mao meeting (Hong and Sun, 2000). Although these events were government-launched and organised at the highest levels as they symbolically marked the end of the 22-year diplomatic silence (Roberts, *The Washington Post*, January 24, 2016), they were preceded by the unprompted spur-of-the-moment decision of a member of the US team, Glenn Cowan, to take a bus ride with the Chinese players during the World Table Tennis Championships in Nagoya, Japan. This incident caught media attention and pictures of a smiling and gift-exchanging Cowan and the captain of the Chinese team, Zedong, went around the world (Griffin, 2014). Whilst there

were strict instructions to avoid contact, they became futile in view of there being no personal resentment or bitterness between the two peoples.

Experts agree that Ping-Pong diplomacy came to fruition because the political circumstances were favourable and the benefits of starting a dialogue were bigger than remaining diplomatic strangers (Hong and Sun, 2000). Carter and Sugden (2012, p.102), for example, suggest that the episode 'can only be understood in the context of a complex interplay of transcending political, economic and strategic factors'. The vital point conducive to reconciliation, yet missing in the analysis of the precedent so far, is that although the propaganda must have taken its toll on the minds of both nations, there was no entrenched animosity between the North Americans and Chinese. The bitter enmity in question, which precludes people from communicating, is as a rule either religious or nationalistic and needs time to take root; Ping-Pong diplomacy brought a 'clear indication of popular support' and 'public fascination with a potential new chapter in Sino-American relations' (Cha, 2009, p.1595). To sum up the analysis of the Ping-Pong case, Carter and Sugden (2012, p.116) posit that:

> Broadly, then, we can conclude that the ping pong initiative succeeded because of an interdependence of interests and an emergent 'symmetrical power relationship' between the United States and China, with corresponding domestic personal and political gains for both Nixon and Mao.

Sports diplomacy, however, has poor prospects when the differences between the parties involved, real or imagined, are bigger than common sense or even rational egoism. The irreconcilable character of such differences usually stems from contrasting interpretations of their future relationship by the elites, conflicting interests and dissimilar values and, most importantly, mutually exclusive national identities (Sakwa, 2015; Seegel, 2016). At the theoretical level, these issues are dealt with by social constructivism: a theory of IR that prioritises intersubjective knowledge and ideas over material capabilities (Wendt, 1992, 1994;

Ruggie, 1998; Risse, 2011). Not only does it assume that reality is socially and historically constructed, above all, identities and interests are endogenous to the system (Wendt, 1994). That is, they are enacted and re-enacted in the process of the state's continuous interaction with its significant others (Copeland, 2000; Kratochwil, 2000).

The USA and Cuba's baseball exchanges, which are routinely heralded as an example of sports diplomacy, occurred in 1999. It is less well known that the Cuban-USA's first uncertain attempt to dabble at sports diplomacy using baseball followed shortly after the USA-China rapprochement in the 1970s, albeit quickly coming to a halt (Turner, 2010). Whilst 'Cuba unlike China was not an emerging superpower − rather it was a proxy of a declining one' (Carter and Sugden, 2012, p.116), it did not and, as it seems, does not feature in the sphere of the USA's immediate interests. Thus, it appears that a thaw, of which sports diplomacy is usually a harbinger, was not worth the diplomatic effort and trouble (Turner, 2010). In addition to reconciliation not being a high-priority issue on the US government's agenda, conspicuous provocative incidents between the states and (Mann, *The Washington Post*, May 11, 1975, p.25; Omang, *The Washington Post*, December 23, 1975, p.3), most importantly, the influential Cuban-American lobby made any engaging steps rather precarious.

By the mid-1970s, the Cuban-US predicament had evolved into 'a frozen relationship in which both sides avoided non-essential contact' (Garofalo, 2010, p.28). With no hostilities taking place and a relative equilibrium established, several initial conditions were comparable to the China-USA standoff prior to the Ping-Pong incident. The situation, indeed, on the surface appeared to exemplify a favourable setting in which to initiate sports diplomacy. The decisive difference was 'the absence of a comprehensive strategy and a willingness to show

that the United States in fact considers Cuba an equal and sovereign power' (ibid, p.27). Moreover, seen in the USA as a propitious counter-propaganda and PD move and framed as part of 'the broader effort to develop a civil society', the games, nevertheless, were conceived in selfish political terms (ibid, p.31). The final and most instrumental consideration for the analysis of sports diplomacy effectiveness or otherwise, depending on the proximity of identities and the compatibility of values of the parties involved, is the US officials' naïve assumptions about the depth of the North American influence and its fit with the Cuban self-concept. Carter and Sugden's (2012, p.110-111) following observation illustrates the point in question:

> He [Rogers] notes that prior to the Revolution, Cuba was 'the most "Americanized" of any Latin American country' in terms of cultural consumption. While technically accurate, what Rogers is failing to recognize is that Cubans' sense of self-identity and worth is drawn from a distinction between the American as the Other and a complex Cuban concept of self that is wholly uncomfortable with the influence of US culture, while at the same time thoroughly enjoying the same kinds of commodities as signs of being modern.

Rogers (1975, p.2), in fact, clarified what he saw as key instruments of such 'Americanization', namely 'baseball, hot-dogs, and coca-cola'. Speaking, for example, of baseball 'as a distraction and means of social control during US occupations' of other nations throughout its history, Elias (2011, p.2509) maintains that 'it has produced a mixed picture of domination and resistance'. Such a dual dynamic is emblematic of a hegemon's push for collective identity or SP promotion in culturally self-sufficient and, therefore, resister societies and, most importantly, in politically insecure states (Wendt, 1994; Feklyunina, 2015). As it transpired, the US soft power proposition was not attractive enough and ran counter to Cuban identity; it failed 'to get the outcomes' the USA ideally wanted (Nye, 2004, p.2). At the time, in the absence of political will and a 'compelling reason to "fix" the Cuba problem' (Garofalo, 2010, p.31), and taking into account the USA's arrogance and the agents'

conflicting identities, sport failed to become ‘a cultural glue’ (Guthrie-Shimizu, p. 2013): ‘the shared love of baseball and the goodwill of athletic competition was an insufficient bandage for the lasting legacy of antagonism and mutual distrust between Washington and Havana’ (Turner, 2010, p.67).

There is another important consideration that needs to be taken into account when initiating diplomacy through sport. Diplomacy is effective not when one triumphs on the pitch or perseveres and subjugates the other at the negotiating table. Diplomacy necessarily envisages reciprocal gestures and an even playing field (Cowan and Arsenault, 2008). When one side conspicuously has its way, the other is essentially left humiliated and becomes defensive (Chehabi, 2001). Whatever the diplomatic context, in order to engender a settlement, an outcome needs to be satisfactory for all the parties involved. Turner (2010, p.79), for example, posits that ‘if the series was indeed a contest of “us vs. them,” the United States suffered a humiliating defeat’. The Cuban team’s dominance in a culturally defining and politically strategic game could hardly generate any PD dividends or bring about reconciliation. The broader Cold War background and the overtly ideological embrace of the victory in Cuba, thus, further ruined the prospects of the baseball-triggered thaw. Drawing from social constructivism, with ‘an asymmetrical imbalance in power relations and political and economic interests on either side of the Florida Straits, with Cuba heavily outweighed’ (Carter and Sugden, 2012, p.117), the odds were against the development of the other regarding culture when the convergence of values and interests could technically become possible.

Ultimately, PD differs from propaganda in that it is not as state based or as strictly censored. It was made possible fundamentally by developments in communication technologies

(Nickles and Paull, 1990) and the growth of the participation of general publics in politics (Melissen, 2005). It could also be simplistically generalised as propaganda at an advanced level with the exclusion of hostile intent (Gregory, 2008; Berg *et al.*, 2012). It is important to note, however, that the menacing and sinister undertone of propaganda was socially constructed and assigned to a concept as a result of its misuse by politicians of the past (Cull, 2010). Likewise, PD, although largely seen as an unambiguous enterprise with minor and uncommon exceptions, provided the fundamental listening tenet is observed and no deliberate corruption of its principles takes place, is anything but immune to the fate of propaganda in the long run.

3.2.1 New PD

The onset of the post-Cold War era has posed new challenges for governments. For example, governments during this era have faced challenges arising from issues such as global terrorism, pandemic diseases, and climate change to name but a few (Melissen, 2005; Wang, 2005). These global issues, largely facilitated and accompanied by a redefinition of communication spaces, have forced states and traditional diplomacy to adapt to new realities and allegedly embrace a more proactive and transparent approach to foreign policy (Cull, 2010; Evans and Steven, 2010). It is this more cooperative, more responsible, and inclusive approach to IR that has come to be known as new PD (Gregory, 2008; Gilboa, 2008).

The goals of new PD are, likewise, to an extent different from those of propaganda and the PD of the past. Since the establishment of a unipolar international system, a conflict of ideologies based on pertinent theories of economic development, allegedly, has given way to the pursuit of reputation, positive image, and ultimately a strong national brand (Wang, 2005; Melissen, 2005). There exists the widespread assumption that those intangible constructs, achieved through the power of attraction rather than by military means or hard power, are

more coveted by states nowadays than territory or access to raw materials (Nye, 2014). To that end, the rise of new PD might have been not so much prompted by advances in the technological sphere and the reappraisal of public opinion regarding its role, as by the displacement of the established ideologies of capitalism and communism by more secular national successes.

Seminal examples of SMEs used for PD purposes include the three 'Asian' Olympic Games[1]; as Horton and Saunders stress (2012, p.890), 'all three festivals were immersed in political diatribe, and were heavily driven by public diplomacy.' Yet it is the 1988 Seoul Olympics that deserve particular attention. Considering the geostrategic dissolution of the communist bloc in 1991, the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games could be appraised as a theatrical performance of the Cold War's closing chapter, which, by triggering South Korea's diplomatic rapprochement and commercial cooperation with the USSR and its satellites, expedited the impending triumph of democratic ideals and a market economy (Black and Westhuizen, 2004; Mangan and Park, 2011).

Despite the widely recognised success of the 1988 Olympic Games and the ensuing graduation of South Korea to the club of advanced countries, there was also another side to the matter (Radchenko, 2012). The geopolitical legacy of the Seoul Games is that, instead of taking the Pyongyang side and keeping the Cold War fires burning by boycotting the Games, thereby further discrediting the Olympic Movement or potentially turning the simmering confrontation into a real conflict, the socialist bloc allowed pragmatism to prevail (ibid). Not only did they participate in the Seoul Olympics; they also eagerly welcomed a thaw in

[1] 1964 Tokyo; 1988 Seoul; 2008 Beijing.

relations with South Korea, thus sanctioning the final political isolation of North Korea (Manheim, 1990).

Radchenko (2012, p.1244) equates the Seoul Games with a 'propaganda victory' against North Korea and a missed opportunity for national reconciliation. Since 1984, the USSR had been at a crossroads, which meant either supporting Pyongyang in its conflict with Seoul, or embracing South Korea. As taking the side of North Korea ran counter to the interests of the USSR's new more open foreign policy, the Kremlin decided to take part in the Seoul Olympics (ibid). The decision made by Moscow and Beijing to participate, which also broke the ranks of North Korea's allies, enabled a politically uneventful Games by rendering Pyongyang's menace ineffective. The 1988 Olympic Games, in this respect, became not only an illustration of the triumph of pragmatism and common sense over political ideals, but also of brute and cynical political treachery (Mangan, 1990; Black and Westhuizen, 2004). With South Korea scheduled to host the 2018 Winter Olympic Games, sport might once again be advancing to the diplomatic frontline in view of the possible global repercussions of the 21st century challenges between the two Koreas.

3.2.2 Insights from PR

Whilst the media as an instrument and medium of PD is more intertwined with monologic communication (Staar, 1986; Shulman, 1990), PR theories and models are useful for promoting and augmenting a dialogue 'layer' of the discipline (Cowan and Arsenault, 2008, p.18), which will most specifically influence the national reputation of an initiator (Wang, 2005).

The integral role played by PR within the context of new PD led Gilboa (2008) to identify a separate Domestic PR PD model, which deals specifically with the activities of local PR agencies in a target country in pursuance of the strategic interests of the overseas government.

The idea is that, being more knowledgeable about the target publics, their values, moods and predispositions, local firms are more adept at crafting high impact persuasive messages, which are then spread through more reputable and trustworthy channels than those used by traditional broadcasting channels (ibid). Another argument in favour of the Domestic PR model is that it lends a tangible degree of legitimacy to state-sponsored influencing strategies, inasmuch as it helps to disguise the behind-the-scenes politics and the funding sources.

During the preparation period for the 2008 Olympic Games, China, it appears, employed a Domestic PR model in the West to guarantee a favourable framing. The main idea was to distance itself from the traditional 'rehabilitation and graduation' rhetoric preferred by the West, which was an almost unrealistic task given the 'hegemony of discourse, dominated by the Western ideology' (Finlay and Xin, 2010, p.880).

At the same time, judging by the issues traditionally prominent in the context of the Olympics and the FIFA WC, which are usually championed by civil societies and NGOs, the Transnational PD model appears to be the most popular and widely adopted strategy for framing controversial matters in the media (Gilboa, 2008). The reason for this might be because the Transnational PD model allows states to somewhat distance themselves from any ensuing criticism of a host nation from another state or group of states and their ideological dictates, institutional norms, or political agendas. Using a posture of impartiality and neutrality as a cover, this model puts criticism of a host within a narrative of globally acceptable state behaviours. It has been suggested in this context, therefore, that such allegedly unbiased and nonpartisan NGOs and civil societies do nothing else than promote 'Olympics-related Western cultural imperialism' (Finlay and Xin, 2010, p.880).

It has been argued that PD, which NGOs pursue in the context of SMEs, is tactical in nature (Cha, 2009, p.1597). It is concerned with the adoption of the rule of law in terms of Western standards and the reformation of institutional structures and the norms governing the society of the emerging country. Moreover, ideational transformation is supposed to be reinforced in the national psyche by virtue of the increased adoption of liberal values and morals, which is propagated by sport. This encompasses a more bottom-up process of the dissemination of ideas, intensified through contact with liberal civil societies during the events themselves (ibid).

In this respect, the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games epitomise the most effective example in modern history of galvanising imperative democratic reforms and triggering a change in the collective national psyche as demanded by the international community (Kidd, 1992; Mangan and Park, 2011). South Korea turned out to be particularly forthcoming regarding all the requirements for fear of losing the Olympics and their widely lauded potential benefits package. Thus, the 1988 Seoul Olympics are, first of all, noteworthy not only due to the grand opening of the country to the wider world, but also because of their role in promulgating South Korea's swift transition to a Western-style liberal democracy and an economic powerhouse (Bridges, 2007; Horton and Saunders, 2012; Radchenko, 2012).

Notwithstanding the fact that SMEs are a huge PD vehicle, PD taking place during the preparation stages is by no means less prominent. With regard to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, there was an obvious and unquestionable failure in the PD of civil societies and NGOs, not least whilst they proved unable to strike a balance between their own values and agendas and those of the Chinese people. Instead of looking for common ground, the West predominantly

took a chauvinistic stance, discarding the essence of the Chinese people's Olympic aspirations and their origins (Manzenreiter, 2010).

As a result, on the eve of the 2008 Olympic Games, there appears to have been a well-organised dedicated anti-Chinese one-way asymmetrical campaign, which was characterised by a synthesis of different themes and a combination of high-profile agents and mediums. It also seems that the Transnational PD model of anti-Chinese PD was at its height during the international stages of the torch relay; it was further exacerbated by the vilification of the intent behind the opening ceremony (Yardley, *The New York Times*, August 8, 2008; Spencer, *The Telegraph*, August 1, 2008). The extensively media-covered torch relay, chosen as the most appropriate venue for the anti-Chinese campaigns, was characterised by a dramatic difference in audience behaviour, which unequivocally testifies to the polarisation of the Chinese-related attitudes (Economy and Segal, 2008). This could be due to three factors. Firstly, the relative success of the Chinese PD in Asia, Latin America and Africa, or the existence of more serious political and economic undercurrents between the regions and China, led to the subsequent pro-Chinese attitudes in these regions (Lukunka, 2009). The second reason involves Western and Western-orientated nation states professing a laissez-faire neo-liberal doctrine, and thus being belligerently disposed to unfavourable attitudes towards China (Suzuki, 2009). The third factor is the 'relative legitimacy, reach and influence of Western-based NGOs and civil society groups across the globe' (Finlay and Xin, 2010, p.881).

3.2.3 Media under New PD

Sports mega-events, being probably the biggest media-covered occurrences in the world, offer a fruitful avenue for the utilisation of communication theory concepts such as agenda setting, framing and priming, which have a substantial bearing on PD and occasionally exert pressure

on governments to introduce reforms (Finlay and Xin, 2010; Moretti, 2013). Agenda setting, for example, envisages that issues receiving heightened attention in the media will be simultaneously assumed to be of paramount importance by the general public (Groshek, 2008). Framing, in turn, is a particular interpretation of an event depending on the position of the particular media channel involved, which does not necessitate its representative and impartial character (Entman, 2004; de Vreese, 2005). Finally, priming involves media-suggested benchmarks that can be used to evaluate leadership figures (Goidel *et al.*, 1997).

There are two established traditional approaches to the framing of the Olympic Games hosted by non-Western peripheral states. The Olympics are either characterised as a 'coming-out party' of an emerging state and appraised in terms of a graduation into the community of civilised nations (Seoul 1988, Mexico City 1968; Black and Van Der Westhuizen, 2004; Cho and Bairner, 2011; Mangan, 2012), or they are assessed as the final rehabilitation benchmark of 'nations that have done their penance for breaking away from the norms shared by core states' (Munich 1972, Tokyo 1964; Finlay and Xin 2010, p.879; Tagsold, 2010; Kietlinski, 2011).

Although democratic nation states with troubled pasts appear to use SMEs to dissociate themselves from their histories (examples include Germany, Japan, and Italy) (Grix, 2016), non-liberal states with communist legacies in particular are comfortable with alluding to what they want to see as nation defining, though contested, historical periods, often with nostalgic sentiment (for example, China and Russia) (Persson and Petersson 2014). In this respect, in a rehabilitated state, a definitive de-monumentalisation process takes place (Schrag, 2009), which is evident both in the emerging architectural traditions and in the placatory presentation of its culture. There is a tendency to omit, wherever possible, any detailed elaboration of

certain historical periods, or attempts are made to diminish their significance within the nation's identity. This was an approach taken by former axis powers in the context of hosting the Olympics (Tagsold, 2010). Non-liberal states, on the contrary, appear to increasingly draw inspiration from a menacing and overbearing interpretation of their historic and cultural paths, which become emblematic in grandiose SMEs designated architecture, invoking glory and power (Grix and Kramareva, 2015). This latter approach became particularly visible during the Beijing and Sochi Olympics (Luo, 2010; Golubchikov, 2017).

The 2008 Olympic Games, not least through their noteworthy cutting-edge sports facilities, signalled China's desire to attain global recognition, respect and esteem, as well as a 'restoration of national greatness' (Mangan, 2010, p.2334). Horton and Saunders (2012), for example, argue that through hosting the 2008 Olympics, China was endeavouring to achieve an autonomous status within the classification of global power structures. Simply put, China wanted to distance itself from several Western discourses including human rights, liberalism, and democracy. The Chinese state aimed to accentuate the distinctiveness of its political and cultural system, thus appealing to be governed and assessed by a different set of rules than those that are valid in the West (Finlay and Xin, 2010). At the same time, however, China attempted to demonstrate that its model is not necessarily antagonistic or opposed to the Western one; it is rather a glocalised and hybrid version of it. This Chinese hybrid, however, purports to transform the Western understanding of modernity and the balance of power within the foreseeable future (Mangan, 2010).

As a result, the Chinese model could prove irresistibly attractive to non-liberal or authoritarian regimes due to its successful economic strategies, which remain based on illiberal ideological rhetoric. Sport and the 2008 Beijing Olympics, in this respect, come as a

stellar illustration of the potency of the 'going imperialistic and staying autocratic' paradigm (Mangan, 2010, p.2344). Accordingly, China was punished for daring to challenge Western cultural and normative hegemony and superiority over the assertion of global and local rules (Finlay and Xin, 2010).

It is due to the differences in the appreciation and interpretation of the messages that targeted the domestic audience and those abroad, that the Western media came under a great deal of criticism in the context of the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the more recent 2014 Sochi Olympics (Wasserstrom, 2008; Dejevsky, *The Guardian*, February 13, 2014). This process was largely seen as biased, and thus it undermined its own authority even in the eyes of the westernised Chinese and Russian publics, by portraying a very one-sided picture. As several citizens of these countries saw it, the Western media was not just anti-authoritarian, but was also anti-Sino or anti-Russian in terms of its rhetoric, whilst imposing the dictatorship of liberalist conformity (Finlay and Xin, 2010). Such an unethical manipulation of public attitudes, in turn, is a part of the larger corrupt media ecology issue articulated by Miskimmon and O'Loughlin (2017).

An example of uncontrolled media messages that pose a threat to the PD of a nation state, even though they are still illustrative and expressive of the prevailing official sentiment, is the unrestrained and impertinent comment of a *CNN* reporter during the coverage of the torch relays, featuring 'thugs and goons' lexicon with regard to the Chinese, and 'junk' to the goods produced in the country (Finlay and Xin, 2010, p.881). This logically sparked a diplomatic reaction, ameliorated only by an official apology and distinction made between the Chinese people and the regime, to which the comment allegedly referred (China View, 2008). In this regard, it is noteworthy that the controversial report appeared on *CNN*, which is globally

applauded for its non-partisanship and impartial accounts of events ('Unbiased and Unloved', *The Economist*, September 22, 2012).

The Chinese media, in turn, highlighted the anti-Chinese protests, drawing attention to pro-Tibet activists and Western-sponsored 'conspiracy networks', as becoming determined to undermine the Olympics ('Dalai Coterie's Conspiracy Aimed at Sabotaging Olympics, Seeks Tibet Independence', *Xinhua News Agency*, April 7. 2008). This is especially characteristic of the tactics employed in the Basic Cold War model and the interpretation of dissident views, apparently still firmly entrenched in non-liberal states. It could, however, also form a categorisation of the groups that are active under the auspices of the Domestic PR model.

Such a state of affairs, in turn, arguably gives rise to a strong anti-Western sentiment and sees the emergence of antipathetic militant nationalism. This leads to an assumption that Western PD, instead of using SMEs in non-liberal states as a setting for communication between civilisations (Lynch, 2000), intentionally precludes any form of dialogue by antagonising foreign publics. In recent years, an increasing amount of literature suggesting that anti-Sino sentiment in the West, and consequently the negative framing of the 2008 Olympics, might have its roots in subconscious fears about the dawn of the Pacific era or a third model of imperial diplomacy, has been published (Mangan, 2010). Therefore, Chinese cultural and sports diplomacy has also been interpreted by many as a form of imperialism. A number of scholars have even gone as far as to posit that PD activities augmenting SMEs unequivocally testify to the re-emergence of a 'confrontation between liberalism and autocracy' (Mangan, 2010, p.2338), which finds its reflection in the obvious geopolitical recalibration.

3.3 Place Branding and SMEs

Place branding as a theory has gradually evolved from traditional marketing in the late 1980s as cities, regions, and countries have attempted to counter the challenges of the global urban marketplace, such as the declining mass industrial culture, and have exploited its arising opportunities (Barke, 1999; Kavaratzis, 2004). The change of political elites, the collapse of certain supranational states, and the emergence of new independent nation states have forced cities and their citizens to look for new sources of self-identification and urban revival (Hubbard and Hall, 1998). Local elites, 'in the search for new roles for cities and new ways of managing their problems' (Barke, 1999, p.486), quite in the spirit of the times, have assumed a business-like approach to tackle the challenges with which they have been faced (Kotler *et al*., 1999; Ham, 2001; Anholt, 2002). As a result, cities have come to be seen as corporations (Hubbard and Hall, 1998), and image promotion has assumed a pivotal role in this novel approach to urban regeneration and economic recovery (Hannigan, 2003). Following this line of thought, every country, city, and region has a product and service mix, which can be promoted and marketed to the global audience (Ashworth and Voogd, 1990; Kotler *et al*., 1999). In this respect, SMEs have started to be viewed as an essential component of such a mix. Moreover, the majority of the experts in their respective fields have endowed SMEs with the power to substantially increase a host destination's brand image and contribute to its brand equity (Grix, 2012; Horne and Houlihan, 2014). The imminent problem, however, is that a large number of academics, readily followed by practitioners, have started substituting the notion of image promotion with elusive place branding (Anholt, 2008; Fan, 2010). The central point here is that the term image promotion is quite contentious in itself (Ståhlberg and Bolin, 2016). The problem is that it is comprised of two concepts, which although are habitually used together, relate to rather incompatible ideas.

Firstly, a brand image in its simplified version is a set of associations, beliefs, and attitudes relating to a particular name or a sign in the mind of a consumer. A widely accepted definition of a place image was devised by Kotler *et al.* (1999, p.160). These authors posit that it is:

> the sum of beliefs and impressions people hold about places. Images represent a simplification of a large number of associations and pieces of information connected with a place. They are the product of the mind trying to process and pick out essential information from huge amount of data about a place.

Therefore, a country's image could be considered to be a fusion of the acquired knowledge about a country's art, music, history, politics, famous residents, and geographical and climate characteristics (Endzina and Luneva, 2004; Evans, 2003). Due to so-called information asymmetry and individual national mentality, different nations hold different images about one and the same country, which do not usually correspond to reality (Morgan *et al.*, 2002). What differentiates place image promotion from conventional branding is that the former always has to deal with a set of established ideas and stereotypes, whereas branding does not necessarily envisage repositioning (Anholt, 2008). To illustrate the point, China, in order to 'advertise the might of the government … and to impress the non-Chinese as a superpower' (Luo, 2010, p.779) and, thus, exercise SP during the 2008 Beijing Olympics, first had to tackle its 'untrustworthy' image conditioned significantly by heavy pollution, tarnished human rights records, and a reputation for being a world factory producing law-quality goods (Li, 2013, p.257). On the other hand, in 2012, Britain was faced with the challenge of addressing the image of a dwindling empire with antiquated traditions. The 2012 London Olympics were, thus, envisaged to transform Britain from a 'backward-looking and hidebound, arrogant and aloof' (Leonard cited in Zhong *et al*., 2013, p.395), as it was seen in some parts of the world, to a country spearheading modernity (Oetller, 2015). In order to rebrand 'its historical success alongside its modern equivalents in a way that is relevant and

fascinating' (Zhou *et al*., 2013, p.872), the British Olympic Association and the directors of the Olympic ceremonies carried out a stellar job in emphasising British 'heritage, creativity, sport, and music' (ibid). Whereas these national accomplishments and peculiarities 'lent themselves well to rebranding Britain' (ibid) and went down remarkably well with the public, such national features as 'innovation, technology, entrepreneurship, knowledge (i.e., science and research), and … green initiatives' (ibid), which also featured prominently in the ceremonies, did not strike a chord internationally (Arning, 2013).

The claim made here is that an image defies the direct control of the producer, which in this case is either a city or a state. An image is formed within the mind of a person and, contrary to widespread beliefs, this occurs not as a result of advertising campaigns and promotional activities, but rather through the mental interpretation of contact with a brand. In other words, an image in this sense is formed in the eye of the beholder. This dichotomy appears to complicate the elites' endeavours to provide a coherent unified umbrella brand, which could simultaneously secure buy-in from the local community as well as from the international publics (Fan, 2010). In the end, the 2012 London Olympics succeeded in repositioning a country through an ironic take on tradition and a celebration of its modern-day pop culture icons. A notable and memorable example of Britain's unorthodox approach to its identity was James Bond's appearance alongside Queen Elizabeth during the opening ceremony (Park and Tae, 2016). In view of this, Kotler and Gertner's (2002) idea that a country's image can not only be evaluated and measured, but might also be influenced by marketing managers, is accurate to the extent that a particular visual image can be produced and promoted. Indeed, Knott *et al*. (2017, p.902) recently argued that SMEs 'should be included in the list of nation brand identity "communicators", as [they] possess the potential to aid the development or re-positioning of a nation brand image'. If the images are to change the perception of a host,

however, they have to be credible or at least correspond to reality. That is, if a country wishes to show a changed self, a reformed self or a modernised self, it has to live up to its promises. In this sense, therefore, the spectacular Olympic façade should not conceal invidious sides of a society or cover the underbelly of a political system, but rather uncover serious concerted efforts to change for the better across the indicators that form a country's umbrella brand (Anholt, 2008). It is by improving itself with regard to tourism, investment, culture, export brands, people, and the political decisions of elites, that a country builds a robust national brand that can be further promoted through SMEs (ibid). From this perspective, a nation's branding efforts can be regarded as an integral part of a country's SP and should precede its promotion (Mariutti, 2017).

An important distinction exists, however, between national identity and national brand identity. Although there is a link between the two concepts, the former develops naturally through the course of time and exists irrespective of whether or not individuals are aware of its existence (Anholt, 2008; Kavaratzis, 2004). National brand identity, on the other hand, is a subjective construct, developed by brand specialists usually for a specific occasion and in pursuance of definite economic or political objectives (Fan, 2010; Anholt, 2010). China's brand identity in the context of the 2008 Olympics, for example, was shown as the 'New Beijing, Great Olympics', which was based on the principles of 'Green Olympics, High-Tech Olympics and People's Olympics' (Li, 2017, p.256). Arguably, what this particular national brand identity does, is shows the three-fold nature of China's Olympic objectives. Beijing, thus, fore fronted its efforts to change for the better with regard to sustainable development, thereby addressing the Western criticisms of air pollution and broader environmental issues (Giulianotti, 2015). This also placed the main source of its competitive advantage, namely its technological genius, in the limelight. However, most significantly, it emphasised its focus on

nation building through the Olympics (Luo, 2010). By contrast, the 2012 London Olympics appeared to demonstrate the quintessential Britishness of the 21st century (Bryant, 2015), thereby presenting Britain as 'a nation secure in its own post-empire identity' (Hepple, *The Huffington Post*, February 16, 2012). Such representations are part and parcel of what both Britain and China are and want to be; however, they are not all that there is to these nations. National brand identity is, therefore, based on the constituents of national identity and the most distinctive, enduring, and representative traits of a particular nation (Kotler *et al.*, 1999; Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002), which differentiate it from other nations and positively resonate with the target audience. However, as the examples above show, national brand identity is not only context- and time-dependent; it also lends itself to various modifications and interpretations subject to stakeholders' requirements and strategic interests (Kotler *et al.*, 1999).

What this suggests is that, apart from being inimitable and memorable, national brand identity should draw upon 'all actions and activities that characterise the image of the [place], events and in the last resort the chemistry of the people who operate there' (Florian, 2002. p.24). In short, while national identity is relatively permanent and solid change resistant, national brand identity is rather flexible and, thus, not limited in numbers. In other words, national identity exists autonomously of political will or targeted measures, and due to the particular perseverance of cultural stereotypes and societal patterns of thinking, oftentimes in spite of them. National brand identity, on the contrary, lends itself to be tailor-made for the occasion. Accordingly, Germany's identity in the context with the 2006 FIFA WC became 'Land of Ideas' (Grix and Brannagan, 2016), whereas China, among other things forefronted its commitment to peaceful rise through the 'One World, One Dream' motto (olympic.org). The

link between national identity and national brand identity, therefore, is that the latter is a derivative of the former or an adapted simplification.

The 1964 Tokyo Olympics sparked the Asian Olympic Discourse (Close *et al.*, 2007; Manheim, 1990), later enriched by South Korea and China, which came to denote Asian excellence in Olympic Games organisation (Tagsold, 2010; Horton and Saunders, 2012, Abel, 2012). This excellence was, in turn, based on an appreciation and subtle celebration of the hosts' national cultural distinctiveness and the efficacious implementation of pertinent domestic and international agendas in the process. In retrospect, the 1964 Tokyo and the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, using recent terminology, could be conceptualised as the first targeted nation branding Games (Horton and Saunders, 2012), in view of the unprecedented modernisation of the urban fabric and democratic reforms that were precipitated, as well as the nation-wide mobilisation of administrative, financial, and labour resources to bring them about. This assumption, however, might not be particularly accurate. Evidence suggests that both Japan and South Korea were motivated by the political exigency of national self-determination, rather than by economic or image-making expediency (Mangan *et al*., 2011). Although consistent national identity is at the heart of place branding, the concept yet appears to be more applicable to an analysis of the SMEs of the 1990s. According to Tagsold (2010, p.291), with particular reference to the 1964 Tokyo Games:

> Since the Olympic Games have turned into highly merchandised events, keywords such as 'place promotion' and 'managing spectacle' seem to be most appropriate in describing the stakes for urban planners. But urban planners before the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games had different notions. This was especially the case in cities such as Tokyo, where symbolic politics and the burdens of history called for image management not simply in order to enhance marketing opportunities but to reconstruct national identities.

The 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo, besides signalling the return of a repentant Japan, were envisaged to fulfil an overarching agenda, namely to map out the country's place in modernity, which allowed for the maintenance of national distinctiveness. This hybrid path, where sport played a pivotal role, thereby constituted Japan's new evolving identity (Niehaus and Tagsold, 2011). Japan was determined to show the world its commitment to a peaceful Western-style technological and economic development, which, nevertheless, essentially entailed adherence to its cultural values (Horton and Saunders, 2012). In this respect, participation in WWII was to be reconciled with, rather than negated or erased from national memory. In doing so, during the first satellite telecast of the Olympics, the official narrative juxtaposed Japan's ultra-modern infrastructure, such as the *Shinkansen* bullet-train and other cutting-edge urban achievements and sporting facilities (for the legacy of the Tokyo Games, see Table 6), with traditional symbolic architecture, such as the Meiji Shrine and the figure of the emperor or the *hinomaru* (Rising Sun flag) (Tagsold, 2010).

There are two factors that all three Asian Olympic Games have in common which, arguably, make the Asian Olympic discourse stand out from that of the democratically advanced states. These are nationwide, almost 'state-of-emergency' mobilisation of resources, coupled with the seminal role played by civic (inclusive) nationalistic sentiments and a surge of national pride and patriotism associated with hosting the Games (Luo, 2010; Finlay and Xin, 2010; Mangan *et al.*, 2011). As Horton and Saunders maintain (2012, p. 903):

> The characterisation of these events as a 'coming-out party' focused on each nation's attempts to rebrand themselves via the Olympics for consumption by the international community and for their own people. The rebranding was predicated on the need for each of the host nations to shed an old skin or perhaps an unsavoury visage, if not to induce a total national metamorphosis.

Japan's and South Korea's experiences are remarkable; in view of the circumstances, it was necessary for these countries to assume new identities in a limited timeframe. The synthetic

nature of Japan's post-WWII identity and South Korea's post-Cold War identity, which represented simplified interpretations of their cultural DNA adopted primarily for the West's consumption, instantaneously became enduring and economically lucrative national brand identities. In this respect, the Olympic Games became a part of modern mythology and helped to ingrain these new identities in the national psyche, reducing the cognitive distance between them. Yet, the complexity of the concepts of national identity and national brand mean that it is rather difficult to transmit a coherent unified message to different target groups across different markets (Anholt, 2010). Collins (2007), for example, attributes the West's difficulty in interpreting the symbolic meanings of the East Asian Olympic Games to the paucity of cultural dexterity in the first place. He concluded that the central message, which was inward-directed and intended to consolidate the nations in the face of their upcoming socio-economic global offensive, has escaped the wider audiences.

The 1960 Rome Games and the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich were also inescapably evaluated with the nations' precarious pasts in mind, which inevitably put pressure on them to show their demilitarised identities and new-found developmental paths in a positive light (Tagsold, 2010). In these two cases, in contrast to the Tokyo Games with its strong historical and cultural undertones, the hosts chose a safer route, refraining from political connotations, whilst transmitting a string of messages through the Olympic architecture. This was particularly the case in Munich, labelled by critics in the run up to the event as '72 two times 36' (ibid, p.299), where through explicitly aerial and light Olympic design all links with the infamous 1936 Berlin Games and the Nazi legacy were symbolically broken.

3.3.1 Competitive Identity

Another noteworthy approach to place branding is Competitive Identity (Anholt, 2008). According to Anholt (2008), the value of this approach is that it not only provides a

comprehensive theoretical substantiation of its statements, but also offers a relatively understandable and logical implementation guide and self-evaluation framework. The reach of this approach extends to the domain of progressive policies, statecraft, and proactive governance. In essence, Anholt's (2008) conceptualisation of Competitive Identity is comprised of a synergy of three equally important components: Strategy, Substance, and Symbolic Actions (see Table 3).

Strategy	**Substance** (detailed implementation process of Strategy)	**Symbolic Actions** (part of Substance with high degree of visibility)
Nations Strengths Nations Weaknesses + Envisioned Future Implementation Plan	Political practices Legislation Education Culture **Sport** Etc. 90%	Legislative act Construction of a building **Mega-event** Etc. 10 %

Table 3: Competitive Identity summary (Source: Anholt, 2008)

SMEs are by no means the only Symbolic Actions to which the governments resort, yet they certainly are the most popular due to their high profile, significance, and universal appeal (Zhou *et al.*, 2013). As Symbolic Actions, they should be media-friendly, signalling internal transformations within a country, and symbolising a state's chosen socio-political course, which would otherwise not be visible to the international community. SMEs, and especially flamboyant Olympic ceremonies (which are Symbolic Actions in their own right), are widely believed to be the most effective means of positively changing a country's image globally (Anholt, 2013; Zhou, *et al.*, 2013; Ricardo and Delgado, 2016). Knott *et al*. (2017, p.918), for

example, based on their study of South Africa's image transformation after the 2010 FIFA WC, conclude that 'it is in fact the scale of mega-events which is critical to their transformational branding role along with their global reach and symbolic status'. Anholt (2008), however, does not completely support this idea, suggesting that the size of the project and the resources invested in it do not automatically become tantamount to its symbolic value. Moreover, there are inherent dangers in relying on SMEs as image-enhancement vehicles, as they are particularly vulnerable and susceptible to being accused of 'window-dressing' and ascribed a propagandistic intent (Anholt, 2008). Such allegations, in view of social cleansing, unpopular legislative acts, and the abandonment of other important social projects, could certainly be regarded as legitimate in some instances (Cornelissen, 2014; Hall and Hodges, 1996). At the same time, Anholt (2008) contends that every Symbolic Action, even of such magnitude as an SME, is justified if it is a part of a long-term Strategy and a well-financed Substance.

For the Competitive Identity to accrue, an approximate proportion of 90:10 should be preserved, where 90 is the percentage of public and government resources to be allocated to the realisation of the Strategy and Substance, and 10 per cent is the amount of this money that should form an investment in the planned organisation of the Symbolic Actions (Anholt, 2008). In the case of such impressive projects as the WC and the Olympics, such a ten per cent ratio might be almost impossible to maintain, especially within emerging countries like Russia for example, where the whole event's infrastructure is usually absent (Golubchikov, 2017). Therefore, it might be more appropriate not to view the events as Symbolic Actions alone, meant to signal ambitions, aspirations, or claims for a special place on the world stage, or as a 'coming out' party (Finlay and Xin, 2010, p.886), but as more holistic development projects. From that perspective, they do not pull resources from most of the sectors of the

domestic economy, but rather do possess an ability to benefit the whole of the society. Thus, the assessment of the benefits should not be limited to purely symbolic and psychological aspects, such as image or reputation, but must include, for example, larger non-event infrastructures such as airports, roads, hotels, etc. It is in this vein that Golubchikov (2017), for example, contextualises SMEs in Russia as part of the polycentric economic development and special governance. The claim made here is that SMEs should not be reduced to one-off occurrences of elusive and contested value, but must be seen in the context of an all-encompassing strategy, and accordingly, as part of a broader picture.

The costs of symbolic infrastructure and cultural propaganda in the 1936 Olympic budget, which included for example 'the resumption of excavation at Olympia in Greece, the financing of Leni Riefenstahl's film' (Bonde, 2009, p.1461), by far exceeded those of the actual sporting activities (Rippon, 2006). Similar to the 1936 Berlin Games, the expenditures in the context of the 1964 Tokyo Olympics were predominantly on general infrastructural and urban modernisation, rather than investments into the construction of sporting venues. Thus, out of the $2.7billion allocated by the Japanese government, less than three per cent was spent on sporting facilities in Tokyo (Essex and Chakley, 1998, p.195). There is another point that the Germany of the 1930s and the Japan of the 1950s-1960s have in common. As in Germany, in Japan, sport was used for higher-order goals, which formed a precipitation of national revival in view of the humiliating repercussions of WWI and WWII respectively (Rippon, 2006; Finlay and Xin, 2010). This symbolic parallel, in addition to exemplifying the importance of the Olympics for identity construction in the two nation-states, indirectly corroborates the existing view (Tagsold, 2010; Horton and Saunders, 2012) that the apolitical façade of the 1964 Olympic Games was masking 'revisionist conservative neo-nationalism' (Horton and Saunders, 2012, p.893) attitudes among the elites.

Every country's or city's SME bid includes some sort of brand promise, which demonstrates the type of place where a potential host is located and what it aspires to be, and which aspects are going to make it unique, memorable, and better than its competitors and predecessors. Such a brand promise necessarily has to contain points of parity (de Chernatony *et al.*, 1998). This is considered to provide a level playing field for all bidders (olympic.org), and commonly consists of the officially required infrastructure and event objects made to the specifications. Yet, arguably, it is the points of difference that determine whether or not a bid is successful.

Points of difference in this case comprise particularly distinctive and exciting national identity characteristics, which are moulded into the event-specific national brand identity (Chan *et al*., 2016). This national brand identity, in conjunction with high-class infrastructure and organisational prowess, as the prospective hosts claim, is what will make an event into a one-of-a-kind and inimitable occurrence. In turn, the hosting of an event serves manifold objectives, which might vary depending on the country's and/or city's political, economic, and social circumstances (Grix, 2013). According to a number of studies, emerging or developing countries, for example, try to pursue dual objectives: domestic and international. Domestic objectives include nation building and the elite's legitimisation (Black and Westhuizen, 2010; Cornelissen, 2011, 2014; Brannagan and Giulianotti, 2015; Knott *et al*., 2017). The international dimension, in turn, has a number of facets; one of the most prominent among them for emerging countries is still the re-imaging and rebranding rhetoric (Cornelissen, 2014; Golubchikov, 2017).

These processes of changing public perceptions about a host, however, have their own peculiarities in each instance. South Africa, for example, presents a very unusual case because the 2010 FIFA WC was to be staged in a country where class, origin, descent and, most

importantly race, still caused major frictions and discord in society, leading to political instability and constantly high crime rates (Cornellisen, 2011). Encouraged by the organisational success and victory during the 1995 Rugby WC, as well as by its extensive political and social implications, South Africa's elites tried to orchestrate the repetition of the impact of one of the most symbolic events in the country's modern history (Cornellisen, 2014). Thus, owing to the fact that SMEs are classless and multicultural, the WC was supposed to serve national unification purposes and facilitate the process of national identity creation through collective emotions, a celebratory mood, and a momentum of triumph (Cornelissen, 2008). More broadly, Knott *et al*. (2017, p.918) maintain that 'national identity, improved global reputation and political symbolism were identified at the outset as deliberate post-event legacies to be achieved'. With regard to repositioning opportunities provided by the WC, South Africa, likewise, counted on the audience developing an emotional attachment 'with the destination central through the imagery projected, warmth of its people and authenticity of the overall experience' (Knott *et al*., 2017, p.918). In stimulating this emotional attachment, however, the country pursued an unorthodox approach. On the one hand, it sought to deal with the 'Brand Africa' dilemma (Anholt, 2007), which means that 'all African nations are viewed as a collective by outside nations' (Knott *et al*., 2017, p.902) and are associated with 'violence, corruption and disease' (ibid). On the other hand, however, in view of the absence of a coherent and inclusive national identity, South Africa alluded to an untapped pool of pan-African images (Cornelissen, 2011, 2014) (see Table 4).

International Objectives	Domestic Objectives (intangible)

International Objectives	Domestic Objectives (intangible)
African Legacy Programme (continental development): • 'African Renaissance'; • Build a bridge of understanding across continent; • 'African WC' – improve image of Africa/ counter Afro-pessimism; • Develop African football; Showcase own achievements (post-apartheid inclusiveness); Promote tourism	Transcend racial divisions: Give shape to new society (overcome socio-cognitive, communal and socioeconomic legacies of apartheid); Create a semblance of racial unity; Uplift South African mentality

Table 4: The FIFA WC in South African Objectives (Source: Cornellisen, 2011, 2014)

If one applies the Competitive Identity concept to South Africa's WC and attempts to evaluate it in terms of Strategy, Substance and Symbolic Events, the picture that will emerge is likely to be different from the perfect scenario, such as the impressive repositioning success that Germany achieved in the context of the 2006 WC (Grix and Brannagan, 2016). Regarding the Strategy, based on the studies reviewed, it would be safe to assume that any comprehensive version where the WC could have been an integral part, was absent prior to the event (Cornelissen, 2014). It was only when the preparation for the tournament was well underway that the infrastructural modernisation and urban upgrading, which amounted to US85.7 billion, began to be conceptualised in terms of long-term development strategies, particularly with regard to the 'trickle-down' socioeconomic and cognitive effects (Cornelissen, 2011, p.520). As Cornelissen (2014, p.40) puts it, 'legacy planning became a belated add-on at an

advanced stage of preparation, but then in a mostly disaggregated and ad-hoc fashion'. Moreover, the alleged elitist nature of modernisation and the hypocrisy of the leadership's rhetoric led to mounting dissatisfaction within the population regarding governmental policies (Cornelissen, 2011). Such a hostile reception of what a society saw as a disorganised and arbitrary development called into question the unification effect of the 2010 WC. In this regard, Africa's Renaissance Campaign, which comes the closest to what could be a strategic vision incorporating the tournament, might have been not so much a noble mission to unite the whole continent, but rather a back door, in view of the structural conditions complicating national unification. According to Cornelissen *et al*. (2011, p.314) '[t]his aim of engendering a continent-wide legacy and extending potential benefits beyond the host country set the 2010 World Cup apart from previous World Cups and centralised a key political feature'. In effect, as summarised by Cowan and Arsenault (2008, p.25), it was:

> a multifaceted program promoting pan-African economic liberalisation and integration, democratisation, and peace building underpinned by what Nelson Mandela envisioned as 'the rediscovery of Africa's creative past to recapture the peoples' cultures [and] encourage artistic creativity' (Mandela 1994).

Certainly, a notable feature of this campaign was that it seemed to represent a genuine attempt at PD. Any holistic Substance, however, to support the coming of this renaissance in the context of the WC had not been developed (Knott *et al*., 2017). The WC was to become a Substance itself, resuscitating activity in the tourism, construction, and financial industries.

Indeed, any viable Strategy and Substance require a sense of national identity and common purpose from the outset. South Africa, in this respect, is an example of starting from the opposite side, where the purpose was not so much to demonstrate a neat image, but to show that the country can live up to its promises and obligations and stage an event. The event it organised, in turn, was supposed to be no worse than any previous ones that were carried out

by considerably more affluent and experienced states (Tomlinsen *et al*., 2011; Cornelissen, 2014; Knott *et al*., 2017). It was a symbolic event that gave South Africa an invaluable opportunity to show itself in a new capacity, as a reliable and responsible nation that, despite existing difficulties and previous dark sides of its history, could cast aside inner divisions and confrontations for the common good and a better future.

Commenting on the 2014 Sochi Olympics, Joseph Nye (2014) summarises that Russia did not accrue any reputational benefits from hosting the Games. What this suggests is that even the most flamboyant of events does not necessarily trigger a desired change in public opinion. Or else, even if it does, it is usually emerging and non-liberal hosts that find it hard to maintain the momentum and keep up a reputation after an event for an extended period of time. Grix and Brannagan (2016) explain that such image leveraging failures are caused by insufficient credibility within the hosts' national brand identities behind the spectacular background of the SMEs. Credibility, which under the realities of the Western normative hegemony necessarily envisages political reforms, remains a particularly elusive and incomprehensible concept for autocratic states. According to Grix and Brannagan (2016), such states, therefore, each time aspire to outperform each other in staging the most stunning show, failing to understand the simple truth that 'credibility [is] a value that simple propaganda and/or public relations campaigns often lack' (ibid, p.256). Echoing the point made by Grix and Brannagan, Knott *et al*. (2017, p.920), for their part, emphasise 'the need for authenticity of the nation brand':

> so as to avoid awareness and image decay post-event and the short-lived phenomenon of branding legacies as evident with the examples of Beijing in 2008 and Sochi in 2014 where the public saw through the shallowness of the Chinese and Russian branding propositions.

In short, SMEs are bound to fail in bringing about a positive transformation in hosts' reputations if they do not constitute a part of a wider strategy of change and development, and

are simply isolated occurrences carrying a heavy burden of public expectations. The physical inability to bring about changes and generate impact, which should logically be the result of institutional transformations and a number of successive large scale and smaller events or portfolios of events, from the very start shrouds an event in negative publicity (Getz, 2013; Richards, 2017). Therefore, irrespective of the outcome, there will unavoidably be voices of discontent, which should probably be considered as another inevitable legacy of events, provided that they take place as governments' vanity fairs and exercises in self-flattery, and not as a part of a well-conceived holistic development strategy.

3.4 Soft Power and SMEs

The concept of soft power has assumed a dominant position in the discourse on IR and foreign policy in the 21st century. Governments of all political hues increasingly tend to gravitate towards the rationality of attaining their goals through attraction, political seduction, and the 'ability to shape the preferences of others' (Nye, 2004a, p.2). In short, there has been an evident shift of strategic emphasis in the foreign policy toolkit from coercing other states into preferred behaviours (military force and economic leverage) to enticing them to believe in one's values and follow one's own example and, thus, act in accordance with one's objectives. In the context of these developments, states have started to attribute a great degree of importance to the successful staging of SMEs such as the FIFA WC and the Olympic Games (Manzenreiter, 2010; Grix, 2013). SMEs, in turn, have been praised for their ability to attract an unprecedented global audience and to command attention over a rather extended period of time (Houlihan, 1994; Chalip, 2005). Given the high fluidity and the congested nature of the modern media landscape, they provide a host state with a unique opportunity to propel itself to the forefront of the news and, therefore, to dominate global discourse and to exert SP in the process.

The concept of SP was introduced by Joseph Nye as a potential roadmap primarily for the USA's foreign policy in the post-Cold War era (Roselle *et al*., 2014). At that time, Nye (1990) predicted that material resources and military power, although continuing to form the fundamentals for sovereignty, national security and basic survival of the state, would nevertheless be subordinated to the secondary ranks. Having not envisioned multipolarity, with potential 'poles' such as Russia or China being too weak at that time, Nye saw the major challenges to the then status quo world order coming from a greater diffusion of power, limitations and the cost of the utilisation of a military force, as well as the ascendancy of education, technology, and other more discreet and intangible sources of influence. Moreover, the increased political balancing and strengthening of networking among states, the growing economic interdependence, and the heightened role of transnational corporations and non-governmental organisations in world affairs (Nye, 1990), encouraged countries to seek more flexible, cost effective, and time-sensitive means to achieve their foreign policy strategic objectives than by traditionally employed direct economic levers or by flexing one's military muscle. For Nye, the SP of a state more specifically consists of intangible attributes such as:

> its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when the country lives up to these values at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when other nations see the country as a legitimate and moral authority) (Nye and Jisi, 2009, p.19).

It would be misleading, however, to draw the line between hard and soft power based on the tangibility of its assets. As extreme opposites as the two types of power might seem at first sight, they could equally rely on the same reservoir of resources. The distinction between hard and soft power is rather relational and stems less from the character of the resources utilised than from the intent, causes, and goals behind any particular action (Nye, 2004a).

Whilst hard power seeks to change an agent's behaviour or increase the costs of a particular action, SP ideally triggers a change in attitudes, and thus in inherent values and beliefs. Such a change logically precludes undesirable actions, simultaneously precipitating a target's voluntarily subscription to the desired way of conduct (Kearn, 2011). Soft power is more strategic in nature, inasmuch as its effects are more visible in the long run. Hard power, on the contrary, is more tactical, whilst its outcomes can be felt instantaneously and have more dramatic an effect, usually due to their undesirability. Examples of such an unwelcome application of hard power include military intervention, economic embargo, and other trade sanctions (ibid). The successful application of SP entails changing the thinking pattern of a target audience, tapping into its desires and aligning its Weltanschauung with the one advocated by the leading country (Giulianotti, 2015).

One of the fundamental differences between the two types of power lies in the approach to their utilisation, in terms of the way they arrive at their desired outcomes. At a time when hard resources, such as military capabilities, do not require a direct and immediate application to signal the leading state's intent, SP resources need to be on constant display in order not to be rendered unavailing (Roselle *et al*., 2014).

Another pivotal point of distinction between the two types of power is the ownership of strategic resources. In the case of military arsenals or strategic economic issues, the state usually has the full monopoly, whereas SP capabilities are not government exclusive. Furthermore, a state's intervention in the conventionally accepted SP resources actually diminishes their plausibility and thus strategic value. Indeed, Abel (2012, p.205) maintains that:

> Soft power initiatives may lose some of their effectiveness when they are obviously orchestrated by a national government – that is, when they are explicitly political. The idea is that soft diplomacy is conducted by private individuals – as in the 'people's diplomacy' of the Olympics – lends it greater credibility.

A robust civil society, therefore, might represent the state's most endearing asset. Civil society is a paramount instrument and an agent in furthering the state's SP (Giulianotti, 2015). An undertaking has the highest SP potential when it comes from civil society, when it is based on a grassroots initiative, and when it enjoys extensive public support (Castells, 2008). The previously discussed case of Ping-Pong diplomacy, for example, was successful not only because it found full backing at the top level (Murray and Pigman, 2014), but also because it represented the wider public opinion. It reflected the attitudes and met the aspirations of the ordinary people. Although the government coordinates all of China's SP effort, being most vigilant when it comes to sport (Wang, 2003), and there is a prevailing scepticism about the state of civil society there as such (Nye, 2008a), China in 1971 provided a celebrated case of quintessential sports diplomacy. Although normally disregarding the two essential SP conditions, Beijing was prudent enough to take advantage of a sudden opportunity, which in addition to being just in time regarding the political context, was championed and supported by its people (Carter and Sugden, 2012).

The absence of a clear and nuanced guideline to SP application causes general confusion about how to exercise SP. Fan (2008), for example, sees Nye's identification of the sources of SP as perplexing and misleading, when integral constituents of one and the same characteristic are listed as separate elements. He indicates in this respect that values, ideals and institutions constitute a state's culture. He sees, therefore, the root to the simplification of SP discourse in equating the concept with the state's cultural appeal. Nevertheless, Fan (2008) acknowledges that resources as such have little value in the absence of transformative impetus

or conversion mechanisms, and lists the indispensable components for such a conversion, which include 'capital, political structure, social capital and social structure' (ibid, p.150). Moreover, to become viable SP capabilities, a 'country's resources have to be "legitimised" through domestic and external evaluations of their relative strength/importance in comparison with the resources of other countries' (Urnov, 2014, p.306).

To illustrate the point made, Horton and Saunders (2012, p.893), marvelling at the organisational level and rare profitability of the Tokyo Olympics, attribute their exemplar success to 'the application of the country's genius and competence in socially acceptable and admired ways'. This genius employed to the wealth of nation-specific cultural resources in a secular setting is an example of a conversion mechanism, which enabled the ensuing international diplomatic and socio-economic breakthrough. That is, it was SP put into practice.

Nye (2004a), in turn, categorically disagrees with those academics who equate SP with culture, on the premise that not only does it diminish the practical validity and structural integrity of the concept; it also excludes the context and conversion from the SP wielding process, thus concentrating solely on the resource side and ridding SP of its holistic meaning. He posits that an inclination to adopt a definition of power as resources that can somehow be transformed into outcomes is flawed and rooted in the practitioner's desire to make more or less reliable predictions regarding the target's behaviour (ibid). Resources, therefore, appear to be the only tangible variable in this formula, tempting the faulty logic that the greater the resource portfolio, the higher the chances to achieve one's goals.

In view of the above, SP mechanisms at the very basic level can be understood as the way that conversion intelligence is applied to a particular resource in a given context. The commonly

accepted mechanisms of SP include norm diffusion, rhetoric, agenda setting, and discourse control (Rothman, 2011). Although strategic narratives have been identified as resources of SP (Roselle at al., 2014), they function more like mechanisms that help to rationalise and understand the world, whilst also defining the interests of the actors. This mechanism is particularly noteworthy from the perspective of this thesis.

Strategic narratives are commonly understood as 'a means by which political actors attempt to construct a shared meaning of the past, present, and future of international politics to shape the behaviour of domestic and international actors' (Miskimmon, O'Loughlin, & Roselle, 2017, p. 6). Strategic narratives take three forms: international system narratives, identity narratives, and policy narratives. International system narratives broadly define the system structure, how it should function, and specify the main actors within it. Identity narrative set out the states' role in the system. Finally, policy narratives explain how the state should respond to a certain crisis, taking into account its material capabilities, and articulate an appropriate resolution. Miskimmon and O'Loughlin (2017), for example, ascribe Russia's continues failure to become an indispensable and equal partner of the West in determining the international agenda and, and thus its inability to finally reclaim what it sees as an equitable and fair place in the great power hierarchy, to the apparent incompatibility of their conceptual systems. Whilst on the surface there is little discord in Russia's and the West's diplomatic parlance, in that both advocate the rule of international law, multipolarity, democracy, and the pre-eminence of peace, they could not be further apart on the practical substance of those phenomena. The main difference in how the West's and Russia understand the international system is that the former sees it in terms of the uncontested pre-eminence of democracy, law and personal freedom, whereas the latter propagates the room for cultural adaptation of those concepts and civilisational diversity in general. Inevitably, such conceptual differences make

it problematic for the parties to see eye to eye on the maters of the future structure of the international system. The authors also maintain that 'historical-facing narratives' backed by unpersuasive material capabilities significantly undermine the relevance of Kremlin's strategic narratives, which include claims for recognition of its prestige and authority, attribution of status, normative diversity, mutual respect, and the idea of Common European Home (ibid, p.111). Given the West's particular wariness of the high adaptation costs it might incur in case the international system gets restructured, it resolutely resists any resonant and pretentions narratives of potential challengers, Russia included, by all means possible.

Significantly for this study, Miskimmon and O'Loughlin (ibid, p.112) acknowledge unscrupulousness of the Western media, which not only 'amplif[ies] and reinforce[s] narrative misalignment', but also out of hand denies any legitimacy to Russia's foreign policy. Throughout this thesis, the author will show how misunderstanding and unwillingness to see beyond stereotypes lead to '[the] US and European media projecting an identity narrative of Russia as an intransigent autocratic state and therefore, implicitly or explicitly, propagating a ''New Cold War'' system narrative' (ibid). Moreover, following the similar logic to Miskimmon and O'Loughlin (ibid, 118), who posit that 'Russia's strategic narrative of the international system is underpinned by its identity narrative and this plays out in how it narrates its policy preferences', this study will endeavour to establish the nexus and dynamics between Russia's SP proposition, its foreign policy interests and identity.Acknowledging that sports diplomacy is an essential component of SP, Nygard and Gates (2013, p.237) also established the list of mechanisms through which sport, in particular, contributes to and enhances the SP of a given state, which includes 'image building, a platform for dialogue, trust-building, reconciliation and integration'. Whereas the latter three mechanisms were discussed in depth under the rubric of PD, this thesis will more specifically investigate how

SMEs are used by hosts as an image building vehicle. In the process, this research will significantly rely on the Soft Power 'Package' framework developed by Grix and Brannagan (2016). This revolutionising framework contains all the possible sources of a state's SP as well as lists the mechanisms through which SP works (see Figure 3 below). Although any SP initiative can be analysed within this framework, Grix and Brannagan (2016, p.261) maintain that it is 'sport' – including SMEs – [that] cross-cuts all the domains outlined', and thus offers a perfect vantage point to review a state's SP strategy in its broadest sense.

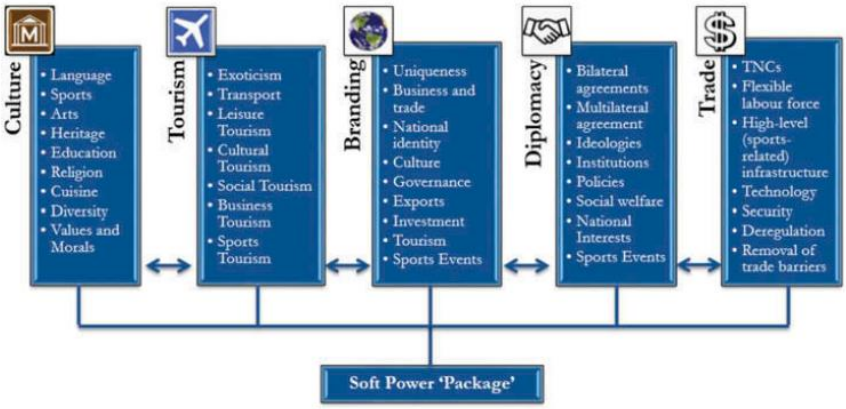


Figure 3: Soft Power 'Resources' (Source: Grix and Brannagan, 2016, p.260).

The authors, as a result, posit that all five domains are closely interlinked, in that SMEs, for example, can 'stimulate other components', such as 'kick start tourism, have an impact on diplomatic relations, and affect trade' (ibid, p.261). The authors' suggestion, however, that such components of the ideal type as 'national identity' and 'values and morals' remain relatively constant (ibid), which is certainly true in the case of the advanced stable states, might not be correct when emerging states, especially those with a recent volatile history, are concerned. This argument, which in effect provides a partial answer to the questions of how

and why emerging and especially non-liberal states are outliers as SMEs hosts, will be debated in the empirical chapters based on the Russia's history of SMEs hosting.

Regarding the channels of communication, SP resorts to those that are traditionally used by PD. In this way, PD is simultaneously a channel through which SP is transmitted, and a vehicle for its creation (Sun, 2008). Promotional channels vary across countries depending on technological capabilities, target audiences, issues raised, and objectives pursued. Chinese PD, for instance, differs from that of the USA in one crucial aspect: it is people-to-people orientated (cultural exchange), in contrast to the media centred diplomacy propagated by the USA (Wang, 2005). This is largely due to objective circumstances, such as the superior state of the USA's media market compared to that of the Chinese.

In fact, the overstretching of the concept of SP to cover 'any form of influence not using military command' (Rothman, 2011, p.50) has diminished its validity in terms of its applicability in practical research and has led to a situation where it 'has been misunderstood, misused and trivialised' (Joffe, 2006). As seen by Kearn (2011, p.66), for example, the ambiguity of interpretation has created a situation where 'the concept is usable as a catch-all term for many phenomena, and it is this lack of core substance that has led to it being adopted and accepted in the policy realm'. Grix and Brannagan (2016, p.251), whilst likewise admitting that so far 'debates [on SP] remain lofty, concepts slippery, and theories opaque, rendering their use in actual research difficult', make an excellent attempt to finally 'add flesh to the bones' and present the 'ideal type' of a state's SP strategies. That is, by analysing two empirical cases of SMEs hosting, namely the 2006 FIFA World Cup in Germany and the forthcoming 2022 World Cup in Qatar, the authors offer an actual conceptual framework that

can be used not only by future SMEs hosts, but also by states generally to build and benchmark their SP strategy.

Overall, the logic of the research on SP is deeply entrenched in paradigmatic conservatism (Roselle *et al*., 2014), emanating from the hard power scholarship, where the locus is primarily on the nature and quantity of resources and capabilities, rather than on specific outcome-centric strategies. Thus, the main problems haunting SP today are the difficulty of providing an exhaustive identification of its resources, the problem of establishing the most effective methods of their utilisation, and the essential continuity and complementarity between the SP strategies and concrete foreign policy goals.

It can be seen from the preceding discussion that the constituents of SP resonate well with a country's branding and PD. Both nation branding and SP, for example, strive to increase a state's standing on the international stage and, thus, its market share in the global political economy. Moreover, 'nation branding can be an important tool in the development of a nation's soft power' (Fan, 2008, p.155). However, SP theory arguably (Gallarotti, 2011; Grix and Brannagan, 2016) offers a more holistic, all-encompassing and, most importantly, outcome-directed approach to generating and projecting a state's enviable facets. Critics of SP (Fan, 2008), nevertheless, see it as more messenger-centric compared to PD and branding, emphasising that it is crucial to attribute more value to the intrinsic characteristics of the audience, its goals and motives, when devising a SP strategy and evaluating its results. Grix and Brannagan (2016, p.256), in turn, maintain that the key to success of the SP endeavour is the elite's commitment to 'long-term relationships based on trust and credibility' (for a comparative analysis of place branding, SP and PD, see Table 5).

	Place Branding	Public Diplomacy	Soft Power

	Place Branding	Public Diplomacy	Soft Power
Resources	People **Attractions (mega-events)** Infrastructure Identity	People Culture Values	Culture Political Values Foreign Policies
Instruments	Marketing Communications Social Networking PR	Listening Advocacy Int. Broadcasting **Cultural Diplomacy (mega-events) (Cull, 2010)**	Norm Diffusion Rhetoric Agenda Setting Discourse Control **Strategic Narratives**
Channels	Civil Society Media NGO's; MNC's Religious Organisations	Civil Society Media NGO's; MNC's Religious Organisations	**Public Diplomacy (Humanitarian Aid, Exchange Programmes, mega-events)** **Place Branding (mega-events)** International Diplomacy (conflict resolution mediation)
Context	N/A	N/A / (in the case of sports diplomacy - preferably not hostile identities, favorable for reconciliation political circumstances and public milieu; even-playing field)	Versatile (although Western-centric discourse prevails, SP works in different contexts); Two requirements: 'a rule-governed institutional setting and the presence of underlying mutual interest' (Kearn, 2011; p.72)

Table 5: Comparative Analysis of Place Branding, Soft Power and Public Diplomacy

Soft power values and ideals have implicitly been equated with a neo-liberal paradigm of IR and the Western tradition (Eriksson and Norman, 2010). Moreover, as argued elsewhere (Gallarotti, 2011), SP relations presume the presence of a political hegemon or a role-model nation, the normative and behavioural system of which arouses respect and adoration and,

thus, forms a favourable context for emulation (Dunne and McDonald, 2013). The established world order is one where the widely accepted legitimacy of a foreign policy of a political hegemon (currently the USA) and its 'soft' dictate, entrenched by various supra-national agreements, alliances and networks, forms the basis of SP relations (Finlay and Xin, 2010). It is this political and economic interconnectedness and seemingly voluntary willingness of subordinate states to subscribe to the rules laid out by the leading state that perpetuates the vitality of Western ideology, namely by raising the costs of deviant behaviour (Zhang, 2012).

At the same time, this leads to a situation in which strategies are devised with no due regard to the needs and wants of the receiver. An argument that will be further developed throughout this thesis, therefore, is whilst a global audience is far from being homogeneous, any ideas or values, no matter how universalistic they might seem, would hardly receive an equally warm response, for example, both in the Western-oriented capitalist societies and in traditionalist Eastern cultures. In the Muslim world, for instance, the US-championed values, albeit such benign and well-intended ones as democracy, freedom and liberty, are tantamount to corruption, lechery, and moral decay (Sun, 2008). Consequently, taking into account the prevailing attitudes, overall political and civil culture, it would be at the very least naïve if not suicidal to use the same SP strategy there as in Western countries. The ultimate danger, pertaining to any SP initiative, therefore, is that the same message will still have a different resonance within the target audience, depending on a divergence in beliefs, objectives, and values (Kearn, 2011).

Soft power, as a result, also has its limitations, inasmuch as what appeals to one country could still aggravate a number of others (Fan, 2008). The consensus, therefore, lies either in targeting a limited number of potential partners or emphasising different, yet not

contradictory, values to different publics. For example, China's SP initiative suffers from an ambiguous response, as it is directed both at advanced and developing states (Ding, 2010; Liang, 2012). This simultaneous targeting of diverse publics entails the risk of messages being misinterpreted and the ultimate intent being categorised as insincere or hostile, resulting in the demonisation of China.

In addition to taking into account the characteristics of the target audience, the successful wielding of SP also requires the full awareness of the context or setting for SP relations. Not only is SP, like any other form of power, context dependent, but the whole difference between hard and soft power lies in the context of their application (Rothman, 2011; Gallarotti, 2011). Fan (2008, p.150) likewise acknowledges the significance of the context and, apparently referring more to the specifics of the audience, posits that 'soft power is context specific, that is a form of soft power is relevant to only one specific country or a specific group in that country'. For Nye (2011, p.11), establishing the context encompasses identifying 'who is involved in the power relationship (the scope of power) as well as what topics are involved (the domain of power)'. Theoretically, nevertheless, at least two indispensable requirements have to be satisfied for a context to qualify as an SP setting. According to Kearn (2011, p.72), 'two conditions - a rule-governed institutional setting and the presence of underlying mutual interest – are crucial to understanding where soft power is likely to be accrued and utilised'. SMEs, in this respect, entirely satisfy the abovementioned requirements and, thus, offer a perfect venue for the hosts' SP projects.

Accordingly, SMEs are strictly overseen by non-governmental organisations like the IOC or FIFA, taking place within a rigidly regulated framework and arousing heightened interest globally. All this, in turn, makes them equally appealing to communities with traditionally

disparate values or irreconcilable differences. The paramount interests of each and every state, however, stem from geopolitics and lend themselves very little to soft manipulation. The argument is that, in order to work, SP, indeed, needs to be wielded in the right place at the right time, when the context is already ripe for political infatuation to take place. Furthermore, attractive and endearing as the state's values and ideals might be, it has to be able to offer something more concrete for its SP to reap any benefits. The next section will address in more detail what conditions the difference in the approaches to SMEs taken by liberal and non-liberal states.

3.5 Difference in Approaches to Mega Events in Liberal and Non-Liberal States

The phenomenon of the unprecedented attractiveness of SMEs for the regimes at the opposite ends of the political spectrum lies purportedly (Manzenreiter, 2010; Murray, 2012) in the universality of the values transmitted by sport in general, such as respect for human dignity, fair play, the encouragement of the harmonious development and education of every individual and society as a whole, and the pursuit of peace (olympic.org). If from the Western perspective exerting SP essentially entails advocating a neo-liberal tradition or living up to democratic norms and practices (Eriksson and Norman, 2010), then SMEs provide Western democracies with an opportunity to reinforce or where necessary augment their image by spearheading these widely accepted standards with a grand sports spectacle in the background. Non-liberal states, however, follow an inherently different route. In these states, which hardly possess a great deal of attractive political, societal or normative characteristics (Muller, 2014; Hong, 2010), as seen from the still predominant Western worldview, an SME, first of all, is a favourable occasion to court the global audience through indicating their relative sameness and willingness to follow along the democratisation curve. The liberal

changes might have an effect on civil society and human rights, yet they do not automatically impact political reforms (Bell, 2009; Ding, 2008; Pavgi and Kadaba, 2012).

Indeed, 'cross-cultural ethical principles and moral values' (Grix and Lee, 2013, p. 8) of sport do not make hosting SMEs an exclusive prerogative of a given government. Moreover, being initially a creation of a capitalist democratic society, SMEs, judging from the latest trend, are far more coveted in non-liberal states. There has been an evident migration of the Olympics and the FIFA World Cup from advanced democracies to emerging countries (Hong, 2010), which, according to Grix and Lee (2013), not only demonstrates their increased financial status but highlights other major aspects of their agency in the international system. This in turn strongly testifies to the fact that, in spite of claims to the contrary, SMEs historically have been and are still used to make strong political points (Allison, 1993; Jackson, 2013; Nygard and Gates, 2013). The 1936 Berlin Games, for example, went down in history as a propaganda triumph and a symbolic legitimisation of Nazi Germany. The 1964 Games in Tokyo are associated with South Africa's expulsion from the Olympic family for its apartheid policies; the 1968 and 1972 Games, with the Black Power Salute and the Munich massacre respectively; and the 1980 Moscow and 1984 LA Olympics are infamous for the USA-USSR tit-for-tat boycotts (Goldberg, 2000; Murray, 2012; Rofe, 2016). Sport, therefore, is not just about participation or attendance anymore; it is much more about the messages being transmitted through it, namely its symbolic and cultural overtones (Jackson and Haigh, 2008).

The second possible reason behind the allure of SMEs for authoritarian or developing/transition (and transition states are usually authoritarian) states is a rigid, though comprehensible, template that they have to follow to win, as they hope, the SP gamble, which SMEs have been contextualised to be (Black and Westhuizen, 2004; Luo, 2010). The host

states have to satisfy a number of obligatory requirements of the IOC or FIFA in the process, ranging from the state-of-the-art infrastructure development to several vital legislative changes, which occasionally run counter to the official line of the ruling elite. In terms of actual self-presentation and identity projection, however, the states are given a lot of room for manoeuvre (Hong, 2010). A growing number of scholars argue in this respect that the host nation's almost decade-long rehearsal for the grand world stage entrance culminates in the opening and closing ceremonies (deLisle, 2009; Arning, 2013; Oettler, 2015; Thomas and Antony, 2015). It is during the artistic part of the programmes that the states are given the upper hand to attempt to seduce the global audience by unveiling their new, friendlier face, thus flaunting their most flattering versions. As Grix and Lee (2013, p.10) succinctly observe, SMEs and the ceremonies in particular are 'the quintessence of the performative politics of attraction' (Grix and Lee, 2013, p.6). In order to understand why several states achieve more than others at harnessing their SP by staging SMEs, it is essential to understand what capabilities different states attribute to the concept, the content of the strategies employed in the process, and the actual set of characteristics the countries in question possess that could fall under the umbrella concept of SP. In addition, the current level of the development of the state and the incumbent regime type significantly determine the media framing of the event, the feedback of the global community and, accordingly, the broader SP legacies of the event (Finlay and Xin, 2010; Zhou *et al.*, 2013; Oettler, 2015).

An analysis of SMEs, in addition to the host's national circumstances, should be informed by the pertinent temporal and geopolitical contexts, which are different in each particular case (Giulianotti, 2015). Therefore, SMEs of the Cold War era, for example, should be assessed against different benchmarks from the SMEs of the new millennium, which are rooted in

evolving challenges and realities. As Horton and Saunders (2012; p.891) note regarding the complex exclusiveness of each Olympic Games:

> Even though the fundamental principles of Olympism, found in the Olympic Charter, are most specific, each individual Olympic Games is conducted and also characterised, as it should be, by reference to the hosting city, the hosting nation and the hosting culture. Each should therefore be considered unique.

This uniqueness, in turn, becomes particularly evident and manifest during the Olympic ceremonies (Arning, 2013), which showcase a nation at a certain point in time and against the background of 'a constant process of adaption to ever-changing historical and geographical contexts' (Oettler, 2015, p. 247). In short, the ceremonies dramatically celebrate what the host is and wants to be and, most importantly, they chart its frame of reference, such as for example, 'post-Francoism (Barcelona 1992), multiculturalism (Sydney 2000) and modernisation (Seoul 1988, Beijing 2008)' (ibid). The value of a proposed classification lies not only in the fact that it accounts for the attendant global political circumstances, but also that it makes an important distinction between the Games, the significance of which was confined to the host city, like 'the Atlanta 1996 Games, an apparently local event, and the Athens 2004 Games, situated between the local and national' (Luo, 2010, p.772) and the fully-fledged national Games, like the Beijing Olympics, which, according to Luo (ibid), became 'national in every sense'.

The classification below (Table 6) includes only period-defining Olympic Games primarily based on their geopolitical location (host city and country) and their widely accepted political functions and purposes. Although the analysis is grounded in academic research and common interpretations, it is solely the view of the present author developed in order to simplify the further study of SMEs. This suggests that, for example, all the Olympics taking place since 1948 (uniformly accepted start of the Cold War) could technically be characterised as the

Cold War Games (Abel, 2012; Horton and Saunders, 2012), with the 1956, 1960, and 1964 Olympics entrenching the Cold War mentality due to the issues with the united German team (Balbier, 2009, Merkel, 2009). There are plentiful accounts of ideological collisions and under-the-table diplomacy between the two antagonistic camps in the context of the Olympics (the endorsement of South Korea and North Korea by the democratic West and the communist East, respectively, during negotiations about the prospect of a joint Olympic team (see Radchenko, 2012)), however the author sees only the Moscow and LA Games as being the most characteristic and, at the same time, the apex of Cold War confrontation. Therefore, the 1960, 1964 and 1972 Olympics are included in a separate category of Rehabilitation Games, reflecting a more nuanced political milieu (see Cha, 2009; Finlay and Xin, 2010; Horton and Saunders, 2012).

City	Country	Proposed Classification	Applicable Concept	Primary Objectives of the Host
Berlin,36	Germany	'Propaganda' Games	Propaganda	official return to the world community after WWI; international legitimisation of the regime through Olympic spectacle; celebration of Arian ideal; architectural incarnation of the Nazi ideology
Rome,60	Italy	'Rehabilitation' Games	Nation Re-Positioning (political marketing as opposed to city branding of the 90's and nation branding of the early 00's)	re-admission to the club of civilised nations;
Tokyo,64	Japan			identity self-reconciliation; nation promotion; acceptance to the club of civilised nations; urbanisation; technological and infrastructural modernisation
Tokyo,64	Japan			
Munich,72	Germany	'Rehabilitation' Games		re-admission to the club of civilised nations; promotion of peaceful coexistence of nations; coming to terms with the past

City	Country	Proposed Classification	Applicable Concept	Primary Objectives of the Host
Moscow,80	USSR	'Cold War' Games	Propaganda/PD	demonstration of superiority of the socialist system
Los Angeles, 84	United States			demonstration of superiority of the liberal-democratic system; first profitable Olympics since 1932
Seoul,88	South Korea		Public Diplomacy	graduation to an advanced state; rapprochement with the communist block; North Korea political isolation; identity construction and projection
Barcelona,92	Spain	'Branding' Games	City Branding	entrepreneurial urban development; improvement of CITY (not country) competitiveness; international prestige
Atlanta,96	United States			entirely privately funded Games; inclusiveness in planning; positive physical and spiritual legacy; 'next best international city'.
Sydney,00	Australia		Country Branding	'Brand Australia' as a multicultural and reconciled society; 'Green' Games; regeneration of the city landscape; reduction of social divide
Athens,04	Greece			reconstruction of tourist infrastructure; modernisation of transportation system; re-branding of Greece as a home of the Olympic Games
Athens,04	Greece	'Branding' Games	Country Branding	
Beijing,08	China	'Nation-Building' Games/'Status-Seeking' Games/'Soft Power' Games		'Coming-Out Party' for China as a world power; increase in China's international prestige; ecological/environmental improvements; infrastructural improvements

City	Country	Proposed Classification	Applicable Concept	Primary Objectives of the Host
London,12	United Kingdom	'Soft Power' Games	Soft Power	promotion of London as a world major city; regeneration of East London; sustained improvement in UK sport
Sochi,14	Russia	'Nation-Building'/'Status-Seeking' Games/'Soft Power' Games		signalling of Russia's great power ambitions; legitimisation of autocracy domestically; foundation of new Russian identity/national idea; creation of a world-class mountain resort; formation of a multi-functional city, integrated into Russian and global economy
Rio,16	Brazil			Brazil – an Emerging Global Power; physical transformations of the city; social inclusion; sport promotion; youth and education promotion

Table 6: Comparative Analysis of Objectives behind the Olympic Games

What this classification necessarily does is it shows, in a similar way to the work of a number of academics (Alekseyeva, 2014; Antwi-Boateng, 2013; Fijalkowski, 2011), that the SP agenda of developing nations or non-liberal regimes is likely to be diametrically opposed to that of the advanced capitalist states and democratic governments. Moreover, the current classification accords with an argument, that the states with unassuming brands, and as a rule, these states are developing or with a poor democratic record and controversial episodes in the past (Gill and Huang, 2006), assign much more transformative power to the fact of hosting an SME (Hong, 2010; Jin *et al.*, 2011). That is to say, amongst other dimensions such as economic success or geopolitical aspirations, countries like India, Brazil, South Africa and, above all, Russia and China strive to 'signal diplomatic stature or to project, in the absence of other forms of international influence, soft power' (Cornelissen, 2010, p.3008). Arning's

precise analysis of the main messages of the nodal Olympic Games Ceremonies, in turn, supports the classification suggested in this thesis. She argues (2013, p.537) that:

> The 1980 Moscow ceremony can be read as an attempt to mollify the West and offer up the soft underbelly of the Soviet Union, whimsy, children's anthems and all. South Korea 1988 ceremony attempted to put the country on the map with a discourse of innocence and harmony at its heart. Barcelona 1992 used aesthetic prowess and a shrewd balance of Mediterranean, Spanish and Catalan to roll back stereotypes about backwards, previously autocratic Spain. The USA in LA 1984 had a brief to remind the world of American breeziness and fun and in Atlanta 1996 to promote the South and a more internationally minded country (with chequered results). Sydney 2000 was a coming out party for Australia, to project soft power with an almost blank canvas and with few negative stereotypes to neutralise, except perhaps genocide against aboriginal peoples.

It emerges, accordingly, that due to the relative newness of the term, and hence the lack of conceptual clarity and the vague theoretical structure, specific SP outcomes depend on a rather loose interpretation made by a host state and mean different things in each particular case (Armistead, 2004). Chinese, Russian, and Qatari understanding of SP (see Table 7), for example, differ substantially from the concept initially introduced by Nye (1990), thus corroborating the argument about a flexible approach to the concept, depending on the objectives pursued.

	China (The 2008 Beijing Olympics)	**Russia (The 2014 Sochi Olympics and the 2018 FIFA WC**	**Qatar (The 2022 FIFA WC)**
	National cohesion; Culture; International legitimacy; Participation in the international system; (Courmount, 2013); Beijing Consensus (Cooper	Charismatic national leader; High culture/language; The strongest economy in the region (attractive labour market for the former Soviet neighbours); Sovereign democracy;	Political stability; Effective income redistribution; Progressive higher education system (Antwi-Boateng, 2013); Leading entrepreneurial state; Contributor to international society (Grix and Brannagan,

	China (The 2008 Beijing Olympics)	Russia (The 2014 Sochi Olympics and the 2018 FIFA WC	Qatar (The 2022 FIFA WC)
Soft Power proposition	Ramo, 2004; Holyk, 2011)	Conservative values (Grix and Kramareva, 2015); 'Friendship of nations'; **Elite sport (lost credibility as a soft power recourse due to the post-Sochi doping scandal) (Strategy of the Development of Physical Culture and Sport in Russian Federation in the period until 2020);** Advocacy of the rule of international law; Facilitation of a dialogue of civilisations; (Foreign Policy Concept, 2016) Excellence in carrying out technically complex projects (Sochi Report, 2014)	2016)
Weaknesses	democratic principles; pluralism; liberalism; constitutionalism		

Table 7: Soft Power Proposition of Emerging States - Mega-Events Hosts

One could argue that SMEs in large emerging countries, such as China and Russia, offer opportune moments to put impressive cases of domestic and foreign policy into the historical and geopolitical context. Yet at the same time, the desired statement of the civilisational pre-eminence of the host is being somewhat downplayed through an apparent emphasis on the nation's cultural accomplishments during the ceremonies and the overall peaceful nature of the event.

Notwithstanding Moscow's of Beijing's effort, non-acceptance of China and Russia and harsh criticism of their practices lies at the very heart of the SP concept. By its nature, it does not envisage any other credible and worthwhile SP resources other than those found in the West.

Whereas both Russia and China have uncontested cultural reservoirs, it appears that for Nye, culture is only an add-on to the Western-style democracy and institutions (*Foreign Policy*, April 29, 2013). On its own, as SMEs in Russia and China have shown, it will not cause a positive shift in attitudes, or, more importantly, in the attitude of Joseph Nye (ibid.). Neo-liberal Western dictate is particularly evident during SMEs cycles because they are both organised and evaluated according to the Western standards. According to Dowse and Fletcher (2018, p.749), it 'reaffirms, rather than challenges, Western hegemony.' Some academics begin to question, in this respect, the very validity of the concept steeped in the West's self-proclaimed moral legitimacy and exceptionalism (Tsygankov, 2017; Sakwa, 2015). So long as the SP concept remains in the confines of the neo-liberalist tradition, China, Russia, or any other normative 'renegades', will inevitably be assessed in the context of their possible challenge to the West (Huang 2013; Kurlantzick, 2007). It appears, therefore, that instead of encouraging normative homogenisation or fostering just and equitable cultural dialogue and a search for the points of convergence, the SP concept, in essence, promotes the US and Europe's foreign policy interests (Krastev and Leonard, 2014).

At the same time, there is a profound paradox. Both China and Russia, along with some scholars, acknowledge that 'soft power as a co-operative non-zero-sum game that is meaningful only as long as the actors conform to the systemic rules laid out by US hegemony' (Wilson, 2015, p.290) is rather flawed. Among the major criticisms of the concept is that it is by design restricted to maintain the status quo and the US primacy in the post-Cold War system. Yet, whilst neither Russia nor China has been capable so far to rise up to the challenge and offer a credible alternative to the Nye's template of how to be liked and make friends, SP remains a part of their foreign policy toolkit. Moreover, for now, neither China nor Russia seriously seems to harbour plans to disrupt the structure of the international system

(Larson *et al.*, 2010). Both states rather want to appear as international law and norm enforcers. For the most part, it means that they are not revisionist powers, despite Russia's recent 'spoiling' actions in Ukraine (Sakwa, 2015). In case, however, the Beijing Consensus, which is the essence of China's take on SP (Birdsall and Fukuyama, 2011, Ramo, 2004), proves successful beyond Africa and Latin America, it is highly likely that 'it would also give rise to a new form of bipolarity in which two models would be in competition' (Courmont, 2013, p.357).

In the same vein, one of Russia's chief SP mechanisms is a narrative about the onset of the multipolar world. Schmitt (2018), by comparing Russia's international system narrative fit with local political myths in France, has shown how Russia may appeal to different constituencies abroad. Thus, Russia's narrative of a more inclusive and fair world, for example, is in perfect consonance with French political myths of the 'Golden Age', 'Grandeur', and the 'American Danger' (ibid, p.494). All these political myths are based on the idea of building a better future by going back 'to how it was before'. All three of them entitle France to more weight in determining the fate of Europe and, in a way, bring France closer to Russia. According to Schmitt (ibid), Russia's conservative and nostalgic narrative of Europe's self-sufficiency and the idea that Europe will be whole and great again only if it sides with Russia to withstand the exploitive US dominance has big potential among nationalist and Christian audiences. In this respect, Wilson's (2015, p.297) opinion that 'this situation does not predetermine the failure of Russian and Chinese efforts to enhance their image, but it does highlight the challenges that these two vast and significant states face as outliers in the international system' is of particular interest for this study.

Either way, it becomes increasingly obvious that the USA cannot continue to ignore China's and Russia's interests and status claims for much longer under the pretence of human rights

concerns and an insufficient progress towards democracy and freedom. Constant denial of Beijing's and Moscow's increasing agency in the international system only aggravates an already precarious balance. Although it is unlikely that either of them will risk entering into a direct confrontation with the West, its profound distrust and disdain only increase the chances that China's and Russia's apprehension of the West will eventually transform into the sense of threat. According to Feng (The Diplomat, March 2, 2015), it is this increased perception of insecurity which might catalyse the sides towards a formal strategic alliance, even though they are unlikely to develop 'mutual trust and common identity'. Feng suggests (ibid), that in order to pre-empt such an unfavourable development the USA might have to reconsider its strong-arm treatment of Russia and its geopolitical hubris in Asia. All the same, Feng's (ibid) logical and inevitable conclusion is that:

> Another chapter in the rise and fall of the great powers – this time played by the United States, China, and Russia – has just opened. Although furious competition among the United States, China and Russia is probably inevitable, a delicate balance of power is the essence of diplomacy. In the context of world affairs, it may take three to have a peaceful tango.

That comes as no surprise, as there is a growing concern about the viability of the neoliberal model of development as such. Risse (2011, p.602), for example, debunks the myth of a 'unipolar moment' (for example Wohlforth, 1999; Ikenberry, 2002) and offers a compelling argument why the 'end of history' (Fukuyama, 1992) was never meant to be. In fact, he considers that it was not even the fall of the USSR but the year 1989 that 'marked the beginning of the end of the undisputed primacy of Western ideas'. To him, neoliberalism that underpinned the USA hegemony proved too fragile in the face of Kosovo, 9/11, and the financial crisis in 2008-2009. Although all those cataclysms naturally brought about an alternative discourse, Risse does not necessarily see it a bad thing. On the contrary, he posits that the rise of the BRICS countries, in particular, made the world 'more colourful in terms of

discourses and competing ideas' (ibid). Whereas Risse (ibid, p.603) realises that neither of the BRICS states is capable yet to match the USA's material capabilities, the fact 'that the United States – and the Western community in general – has lost … the discursive hegemony of liberal ideas (if such a hegemony ever existed)', is sufficient for him to declare the onset of multilateralism.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter explored the three concepts, namely PD, place branding and SP, which are dominant in the extant SMEs literature. It demonstrated how the hosts often fail to acknowledge the differences amongst them, which leads to faulty re-imaging strategies and foregone opportunities in the context of SMEs. This chapter, however, not only indicated where the three concepts diverge but also pointed out how they are complementary to each other and how the SMEs hosts should pursue the whole portfolio of benefits. The next chapters are dedicated to an analysis of the Russian and Soviet sports systems and their practices of SMEs hosting. The main objective of the remaining part of this thesis is to understand what makes Russia an outlier amongst the key SMEs hosts. In order to do that, the empirical part of this research will rely on the analysis of Russia's international system and identity narratives in the context of the two Olympics it hosted. This way the author expects to show how Russia has changed during the thirty-four years that separate the Moscow and Sochi Games and what it means for its strategic interests in the world. Thus, the empirical chapters will also focus on the ideological messages and strategic functions of SMEs and elite sport in Russia. The author also intends to find out what was Russia's SP proposition and its promotion strategy in the context of the Sochi Olympics, as well as what national brand identity Russia put forward this time. The author will also conduct an analysis of the Western media framing of the Moscow and Sochi Olympics in order to understand how the West

interprets and internalises Russia's identity and what aspects of that identity it is particularly opposed to. On balance, this all will shed light on how Russia is different from other SMEs hosts – that is an 'outlier'.

CHAPTER 4: THE PLACE OF SPORT AND MEGA-EVENTS IN RUSSIA

4.1 Introduction

The interest of this thesis on the topic of Russian and Soviet sport is primarily conditioned by an exceptional combination of its political functions. This is not to say that sport was not assigned as a nation-building or diplomatic mission elsewhere; however, it is in Russia where sport is seen in terms of what Grant calls a 'national programme of identity' (2013, p.174). Such is a mobilisational capacity of sport, its indispensable role in generating loyalty and soothing co-option that made different forms of government first in the Soviet Union and now in Russia draw heavily upon sport during legitimacy and identity crises. Given that crises in Russia during the last hundred years became commonplace, the political roles of sport and history also seem to repeat themselves. Broadly speaking, this thesis posits that currently sport in Russia is entrusted with three ambitious tasks: to appropriate the glory of the Soviet era, to mend the reputational damages of perestroika, and to heal the psychological wounds of the 1990s. The first task, significantly through the long-term strategy of SMEs hosting, is effectively brought off and will be discussed in chapters 6-7 and 8-10, whilst the reverberations of the latter two blows Russia has been dealt are still felt far and wide.

Among the main intentions of this thesis is an investigation of what it takes in Russia to turn the total shambles - moral and infrastructural - of Russian sport in the 1990s, into if not the omnipotent weapon it once was, then into an object of pride and a potential source of SP. The issue of sport SP potential in Russia has assumed the utmost importance in light of the recent doping scandals, the far-reaching consequence of which was a partial ban of the Russian team from the 2016 Rio Olympics and includes further serious ramifications, such as the IOCs suspension of the Russia's Olympic Committee. Consequently, the significantly reduced

Russian contingent competed under a neutral flag at the 2018 Winter Olympics and there were no Russian officials at the Games (Ruiz and Panja, *The New York Times*, December 5, 2017). What this effectively means is that instead of asserting Russia as a SP heavyweight in the 21st century, Russia's elite sport development strategy might turn it into 'an international sporting pariah' (Roan, *BBC*, December 5, 2017). This is nothing short of an irrecoverable, even fatal, blow for its remaining SP ambitions.

It is within this context and in the main by revisiting sport's historical background, that this chapter sets the scene for the further evaluation of Russia's sport as a modernisation project. In pursuance of this, this chapter focuses on both the main formative and challenging periods for Soviet and, as it were, Russian sport. It also scrutinises specific technologies, if not entirely Russia's original inventions then beyond any doubt an enterprise it brought to refinement, of creating the transcendental fusion of sport with power structures, or more precisely with the national leader. As a result, this chapter begins with an analysis of the impact of perestroika on Russia's sport and its painful transition to capitalism, before addressing in more detail the evolution of the socio-political roles of *fizkultura* and sport in Russia. With a view to obtaining a holistic understanding of the issue in question, this chapter also attempts an analysis of the rituals of sport parades and festivals and later on the Olympics as the regime's legitimisation mechanisms. As it proceeds, the chapter also examines the mechanics of engineering the New Soviet Person through *fizkultura* and the capacity of sport to provide a certain template for a 'Hero of Our Times'. Finally, it ends with a review of the foreign policy functions of elite sport during Soviet times.

4.2 Transition of Soviet Sport into the 21st Century

Although perestroika, instigated by the reformist leader Mikhail Gorbachov, had an irreversible and rarely positive impact on all walks of life in the USSR including in the sports

system, this period in sports scholarship has received only scant attention so far. In this respect, apart from the structural cracks brought to light after the levels of control were relaxed, publications from the time bear out the major damage inflicted by the media. A former steadfast ally of the Party, unleashed by the chaotic forces of '*glasnost*' and new thinking, lashed out at a rigid state-controlled sports structure, doubted the rationality of the pursuit of international success at all costs, and questioned the overall morality and ethics of Soviet sport (Riordan, 1990). On the wave of the extreme exposure of the degrading and corrupt nature of Soviet sport, an argument often extended to the Soviet state as a whole, several commentators went as far as to accuse the sports system of the exploitation of children (Girginov, 1998), which allegedly led to 'moral impairment' (Riordan, 1990, p.139) and 'inhuman forms of professionalism' (Kedrov, 1987, p.6). Due to the widely abused right to free speech, perestroika had a deleterious effect on the image of Soviet sport equally on the international stage. It drowned in speculations, albeit not entirely fanciful, about the prevalent provision of performance-enhancing drugs, match fixing, referee bribing, and fake amateurism (Sheveleva, 2015).

The impending demise of communism and the disillusionment in Marxist values as well the rapid decay of the national economies before long rendered the departmental-territorial sports system, with its centralised funding, defunct. More precisely, the meagre financing in the final years of the USSR effectively put the final nail in the coffin of Soviet sport. By the time of the Soviet Union's disintegration in 1991, the situation in sport bordered on the abysmal:

> the money spent on sport [were] 30% of real needs (only 10% for swimming pools). The requirements in manufacturing sporting goods and technical equipment [were] almost 3 times less than [was] needed. The number of sports specialists [was] only 30-35% of that required. As a result, the level of public health [was] extremely unsatisfactory. For example, every day about 4 million able-bodied people [were] unfit

> for work; the cost of their disability exceed[ed] 7 billion roubles per year (Uvarov, 1993, p. 20).

The situation with funding was matched by a general interest in sport and recreation. Despite the Moscow Olympics, which were expected to provide a surge regarding mass sport participation, the actual percentage of the population actively practicing sport was found to be between 8 to 15 per cent already in 1983. This further dropped to 8 per cent among men and 2 per cent among women by 1990 (Girginov, 1998), figures far below those officially publicised. Such a plunge in participation, however camouflaged by distorted statistics, could be apportioned in equal measure to falling living standards as well as the disbanding of the whole system of accessible sport, which included the nationwide Ready for Labour and Defence sports programme (GTO), accountable for both health and mass participation and for providing talents for elite sport, and recreational physical education clubs.

Liberalisation in sport, amongst other things, meant that the Party was irrevocably losing the last levers of ideological control over the Soviet youth, who began joining new cooperative or private-owned gyms and sports clubs in large numbers, thus depleting the ranks of government-endorsed organisations such as the Young Pioneers and Komsomol. Such clubs were offering a set of previously unacceptable 'uncultured' sports, such as some martial arts, bodybuilding, etc.; they were often controlled by burgeoning organised criminal groups, a novel malaise ubiquitously plaguing Soviet society in the 1980s and 1990s (*segodnya.ua*, August 6, 2011; *spb.aif.ru*, April 26, 2013). To complete the humiliation of the once omnipotent ideological arguments and to debunk the last enduring attainment of the once invincible superpower, sports arenas, which not long ago hosted the Olympics, were turned into markets simply to pay maintenance costs, whilst others capitalised on the new opportunities. Likewise, despite the declining economy, private money quickly sensed

abundant opportunities in the niche of recreational sport. As a result, while the first fitness club in Moscow opened in 1993, by 2001 market saturation was reached with approximately 2000 sports facilities. By the turn of the decade, the volume of sports services in the capital alone was estimated to be 200 million USD annually (Larshina, 2004, p.222). The government, on the other hand, taking into account an enduringly volatile political and economic situation, as of 2002 had little involvement in recreational sport. Elite athletes were being severely underfunded by the government.

Regarding elite sport, instead of encouraging the competitiveness of national teams through such developments as the official professionalisation in 1988 and further democratisation (Larshina, 2004), Russian sport became a talent farm, thereby further exacerbating rampant national humiliation. The half-hearted and piecemeal adoption of a market-led sports model led to 'more than 300 football, 700 ice hockey and 100 Russian basketball players' being scattered across the leagues around the world by 1995 (Riordan, 2007a, p.549). Torn between Westernisation and the preservation of the benefits of the Soviet system, a model that evolved in Russia by the end of the 2000s seemed to be a hybrid of oligarch-controlled club sport and poorly funded desolate Olympic sport.

Since Putin's rise to power and a renewed significant emphasis on Russia's international stature, Russia has begun its reintegration into the shifting world order, first as a normal power and later, hurt by what it saw as Western arrogance and contempt, from the more assertive position, Russia began playing host to a string of SMEs (Sochi 2014 Winter Olympic Games, The 2018 Football World Cup). Gigantism, the demonstration of political stature, and the pursuit of national greatness are all pertinent; they all show direct continuity

with Soviet tradition, the vitality of the Soviet legacy, and the value attachments of the incumbent Russian leadership.

Current trends in Russia, the USSR's successor state, to exploit sporting success and SMEs as a foundation for a viable national idea and to resuscitate patriotism, have their roots in the USSR's novelty of nation-building around sport (Girginov, 1998; Mertin, 2009; Keys, 2003). Regarding the identity crisis, with the demise of the USSR, Russia found itself in comparable circumstances to those of the young Soviet state almost a century before. Albeit brought about by different structural conditions, the principle likeness lies in the repudiation of the predecessor state's moral philosophy and labours to map out new reference points. According to Grant (2010, p.142), the plan of the communist ideologues was that: 'Once the old regime and its associated value system had been toppled, the time would be right for the birth of the new, Soviet generation. Included as part of this ambitious project were physical culture and sport'. Moreover, Grant (2010, p.152) goes on to say that, 'physical culture was one way in which the Bolsheviks attempted to ''cultivate a new culture''. If for the Soviet elite the withering away of the past was a plus and a chance to build a new world, Russia for at least a decade was trying to make sense of the world into which it had been thrust. With no grand idea in sight and beset by protracted moral fatigue, modern Russia started appropriating successful projects from the different epochs, hence its attempts to reinvigorate sport and the space programme from Soviet times.

Although several attributes of the Soviet sports model, such as the promotion of health and hygiene, defence, and productivity (Girginov, 2004; Jefferies, 1987) for some time lost popularity and governmental support, and thus were of secondary importance, others like the unification of multi-ethnic and socially divided populations and the pursuit of international

recognition gained particular traction in re-emerging Russia (Persson and Petersson, 2014; Makarychev and Yatsyk, 2014). As a result, a ‘‘theatricalisation’’ of sport, using ritual, symbol and pageant’, being an important function of Soviet sport, has successfully migrated into modern Russia in order to reinforce the other enduring legacy: ‘promote a togetherness or a ‘‘culture of consent’’ (Riordan, 2012, p. 66).

The resurrection of sports patriotism and post-Olympic presidential approval rates (Kosachev, 2014) are a graphic example not only of liminality (Chalip, 2005) and ‘communitas’ (Turner, 1967) but also of public enthusiasm or a spiritual Renaissance triggered by a revival of at least one of the state-defining industries and institutions. This attitude is a welcome change to the debilitating insecurities of the 1990s, when in addition to being stripped of its geopolitical importance by economic and political forces, Russia also felt encroached upon by what a large proportion of the population saw as the perversions of the Western world, undermining the traditional foundations of society (Tsygankov, 2014). Taking into account the all-embracing significance of sport in Russia and the peculiar place of the Moscow 1980 Olympics in the national psyche, Riordan’s view contains a partial explanation of the inflated sense of national accomplishment and pride after the Sochi Olympics, as well as in a way foresees the symbolism of the opening ceremony with frequent nostalgic references to several moments in the Soviet era and the glorification of its achievements:

> Russian nationalism is wounded by the international sports and pop culture developments that underlie the country’s decline as a world leading power and emphasise its subordinate place in the global sports market. No wonder some of the older generation harks back to the ‘good old days’ of educational and cultured Soviet entertainment (Riordan, 2007a, p.552).

If the Bolsheviks immediately after coming to power saw sport as a part of a social engineering project and an agent of educating a new generation before anything else with no

links to the past, and only much later took advantage of it for status conquest and image projection, modern Russia due to the circumstances and challenges it faced started from the opposite side. Remarkably, by the time the Soviet Union joined the Olympic Movement in 1951, the New Soviet Person had been successfully brought into being, co-opted in the frequent mass parades and hardened in war, which in addition to the work of an efficient sports machine and questionable amateurism notwithstanding accounted for the domination of the Soviet athletes in the Summer Games[2]. In fact, if the early sports festivals and parades already strove to project 'the image of a modern, developed nation' (Grant, 2013, p.136) and to celebrate the New Soviet person and Soviet ideology, the hosting of the 1980 Summer Olympics was meant to be the ultimate acclaim of the Soviet sport and socialist general achievements. The Sochi Olympics, in this respect, paid homage to all of the above whilst also accumulating successes from earlier times; however, there were no ideological messages as such. What the Sochi Olympics effectively did though was to incite a type of inflated patriotism (see chapter 8 and chapter 9).

[2] The list of the Soviet Olympic medallists who served in WWII: N. Saksonov (silver in weightlifting, Helsinki'52); N. Dzhordzhikiya (silver in basketball, Helsinki'52); G. Zybina (gold Helksinki'52; silver Melbourn'56; bronze Tokio'64 in shot put); I. Polyakov (silver in rowing, Helsinki'52); I. Berdiev (gold in gymnastics, Helsinki'52); Y. Lituev (silver in athletics, Helsinki'52); Y. Tyukalov (gold in Helsinki'52 and Tokio'64 and silver in Rome'60 in rowing); Y. Lopatin (silver in weightlifting, Helsinki'52); S. Chikhladze (silver in wrestling, Helsinki'52); N. Sologubov (gold in ice hockey, Cortina d'Ampezzo'56, bronze, Squaw Valley'60); J. Lõssov (silver in basketball, Helsinki'52). V. Chukarin (4 gold and 2 silver medals in gymnastics in Helsinki'52; 3 gold, 1 silver and 1 bronze in Melbourne'56) in addition to serving in the war had been through 17 concentration camps.
Also interesting with regard to the impact of the war experience on the personality and development of an elite Soviet athlete is an excerpt from an interview of Vasily Aleskeyev, who set 80 world records and 81 Soviet records in weightlifting and won gold medals at the 1972 and 1976 Summer Olympics:
Alekseyev: Gone are the athletes who were born during the war and experienced all the hardships which befell us.
Interviewer: Does it matter that much?
Alekseyev: Without a doubt. Character! I trained in the basement in winter, outdoors. All this toughens up, builds a character. Both a character and a sense of purpose. Nowadays, athletes get plenty of food and don't train. All are lazybones. They all seem healthy, talented. What could stand in their way? Yet, there are no records (Gordon, 2009).

Accordingly, Russia, albeit drawing heavily from the Soviet tradition, in the first place resorted to a string of high profile international sports events to hype up patriotism and importantly consent, leaving the utilitarian issues of health promotion and *vospitanie* (education) to the second stage of the government's agenda. As a result, a tangible amount of attention by the state towards mass sports participation came only on March 24, 2014, with Putin reintroducing the Soviet physical training standards 'Ready for Labour and Defence' or GTO in Russian (kremlin.ru). The GTO standards were in force between 1931 and 1991 and were meant to 'further increase the level of physical education and mobilise the Soviet nation, prioritising the young generation' (Istiagina-Eliseeva, 2015, p.50). Although the preservation of the name, according to Putin, 'is a tribute to traditions of our national history', it immediately raised concerns amongst several Western commentators as an inspiration from 'the era of brutal dictator Joseph Stalin' (*Time*, March 25, 2014). The parallels come to mind due to the association of the all-embracing programme in Soviet times with military training and the restoration of it at the beginning of the Ukrainian conflict and the standoff with the West. Although Putin makes no explicit connections between the programme and the militarisation of the public, he admits that the goal of the 1.2 billion roubles ($18 million) venture, the money allegedly saved from the Sochi Olympics, exists to teach young people 'to stand up for themselves, their family and, in the final run, the Fatherland' (*The Telegraph*, March 13, 2013). The introduction of the standards to the school curricula is expected to increase health and sports participation among the young generation, which according to The Strategy of the Development of Physical Culture and Sport in Russian Federation in the period until 2020 (minsport.gov.ru), has to reach 80 per cent by 2020. This represents approximately a 70 per cent increase compared to the statistics of the 1980 and 1990s. Yet first and foremost, the GTO programme is the first harbinger of the active promotion of the

ideology of patriotism, officially declared by Putin to be the only viable unifying idea for Russia (*The Moscow Times*, February 4, 2016), leading to the instigation of a code of belonging and social integration. Experts see 'rediscovered' patriotism and 'religion and old traditions' as three pillars of modern Russian identity (*PBS Newshour*, July 10, 2017), yet sport, as a further analysis of the opening ceremonies from the Moscow'80 and Sochi 2014 Olympics will vividly show, is where all three conceptions merge free from controversy.

Russia's current developmental paradigm, sovereign democracy or as it were a democracy determined by a sovereign, on the whole has stood on three ideological pillars from the times of Nicholas I: autocracy, orthodoxy, and nationality. Sport in this respect, as surprisingly as it might appear, perfectly befits all three principles. Firstly, the inextricable identification of Putin with Russia's successes and increased stature among other things in sport strengthens his popularity as a president-autocrat. Noteworthy in this respect is that, according to the polls conducted by the trustworthy Levada Centre (levada.ru, March 3, 2014), 58 per cent of the population considered the Sochi Olympics to be the personal achievement of Putin and 73 per cent thought that they substantially raised his prestige. Secondly, nationality or expressions of patriotic collective identification as Russians are equally most effectively incited through sport, in terms of both performance and spectatorship (for collective identity and spectatorship in the Soviet Union see Edelman, 1993). Finally, on the face of it most remarkably of all, orthodoxy is also in full compliance with sport as the latter analogously to religion demands self-restraint and discipline, while both commonly require sexual continence and are a sublimation of sexual energy. The affiliation of sport and religion in Russia is hardly a novelty. During the radically atheist infancy of the Soviet state, the quasi-religious functions of sport were even more pronounced with ubiquitous sports festivals, parades, and pageants finalising the sanctification of Stalin (O'Mahony, 2006). Thus, in a traditionally deeply pious

society, worship of the Heavenly Father was effectively supplanted by an adulation of the Father of All Nations, not least through the ritual of sports festival.

Such a potency of sport, which by far outstretched the boundaries of political co-option and propaganda, was manifest in the preponderance of sport motifs in the Soviet visual art of the 1920s and 1930s (Bown and Taylor, 1993). The ambiguity of sport was evidenced not only in the representation of a sports festival as a context for the pagan veneration of the Soviet political Olympus in the works of such heavyweights as Deineka, Rodchenko, Samochvalov, etc., but also in the iconographic depiction of athletes in the early works of the latter, which redeployed 'the devotional, political and ritualistic functions of the icon … in officially approved culture during the Stalinist era' (Abel, 1987 cited in O'Mahony, p.49). In Russia, with no official culture and lenient censorship, sport remains virtually the only effective medium of indirect influence and mobilisation. Regarding building sports patriotism on tradition, the words of the State Duma deputy, Igor Lebedev, are instructive of the trend:

> We bring back to Russia all things, which were good in the Soviet past and which the Yeltsin team, euphoric from the toppling of the Soviet rule, tried to eliminate. Now we see that many things which were in the Soviet Union and had an impact on our generation, as it turns out, were better than what we have now. The GTO set is one of the attainments of our past, which I consider right for our life (vz.ru, October 6, 2015).

The recent patriotic discourse is not accidental for two equally important reasons. Firstly, Russia annexed Crimea, which has received wide domestic support and triggered patriotism. Russia is also actively involved in the Ukrainian crisis, which is not as popular at home. Both developments are condemned internationally. Secondly, with hard legacies still questionable and soft benefits, such as international prestige and SP mostly squandered, patriotism remains by and large the only tangible legacy from the exorbitant Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics. To support this argument, according to the Levada Centre, 54 per cent of Russians named the

Olympics the most important event of 2014 (levada.ru, December 29, 2014) and a staggering 81 per cent indicated increased patriotic feelings after the Games (levada.ru, March 3, 2014). Therefore, the introduction of patriotic education generally, and patriotic sports programmes in particular, is an attempt to leverage the Olympic and Crimean legacy in the face of small but acerbic opposition at home, and powerful international resistance to Russia's military role in Ukraine. In this respect, the militaristic connotations of the GTO standards come as no surprise. Indeed, as in the early days of the USSR when the army and sport were 'paramount to the realisation of the Soviet modernisation project' (Grant, 2013, p.69), so they are now for Russians during the era of Putin. Equally, as in the 1920s and 1930s under Stalin, *fizkultura* and the promotion of mass sport participation in Putin's Russia are seen as a way to achieve the psychological rehabilitation of society, and initially targeted 'disillusionment and depression' (Grant, 2013, p.69) still lingering from the grim time of the 1990s.

Explicit or otherwise references to Soviet times, and to the infancy of the Soviet state more so, are inevitable because that was when sport as we know it now was inaugurated. However, in order to repudiate the criticism of Putin reinstating Stalinist ethics and innovations in sport, it must be said that his actions, while shaping public opinion, are equally very receptive to popular thinking and the prevalent mood. Whereas indeed, there is a certain nostalgic outlook towards Soviet times, it is rather towards Khrushchev's times that we turn in terms of culture (the times of relative freedom and maximum self-expression) and towards the Brezhnev epoch (the times of highest achievements) when it comes to sport. To support this argument, the surveys conducted by the Levada Centre show the high levels of familiarity in the respondents with the figures of the '*Zastoy*' Brezhnev times and the ignorance of the beloved sports heroes of the Stalin epoch. Yet, according to Dubin (2004), the degradation of collective memory wipes out and decreases the significance of the iconic athletes even of the

late Soviet Union, such as Latynina, Zhabotinsky, Kuts. Based on the findings of the Levada Centre, the expert also (Dubin, 2004, p.80) explains that Vladimir Putin's extensive drawing from the Soviet epoch is particularly visible in sport:

> This research proves that current Russian collective identity is both weak and based on nostalgia. It is determined by the collective identity of the Soviet type and period and a symbolic 'connection' between now and 'the past' is the image of Putin. Remarkable in this regard is the reintroduction of the Soviet state symbols at the turn of the century, as well as his recent attention to the 'mass physical culture' (as a contrast to 'elite' fitness clubs), his public claims of the last decade to return Russian sport its former state importance and world prestige.

4.3 'Hero' in Soviet Sport. Defining Characteristics of the Soviet Sport System

Well before the Ukrainian crisis broke out, several domestic and foreign commentators drew parallels between the Sochi Olympics and Hitler's 1936 Summer Olympics. Former Russian chess world champion and an opposition figure, Garry Kasparov, opined that in a similar way to the Nazi Olympics, the Sochi Games were supposed to contribute to the personality cult and essentially were a 'one-man circus' (Reitschuster, *The Guardian*, February 7, 2014). Russian writer and journalist, Victor Shenderovich (echo.msk.ru, February 10, 2014), pointed out that the victories of Russian athletes on their home turf did for Putin what the German athletes did for Hitler in 1936: celebrated his achievements and dangerously assuaged the global community on the eve of the impending catastrophe. Stephen Fry, unnerved by the LGBT rights abuses in Russia, predictably called for the relocation of the Games, so as not to repeat the precedent of the Berlin'36 Games, as homosexuals in Hitler's Germany were banned and prosecuted (*The Telegraph*, August 10, 2013). The recent borrowing from Stalin's sport organisation system, which was used as a means of social engineering, a propaganda weapon and for the manufacturing of a new ideal type of man, again made some see Putin's envisaged ideal society as disturbingly similar to those of the two most efficient totalitarian states in the 20th century (Keys, 2009; Girginov, 2004).

The Third Reich's racial project, as vile as it was, was also historically unprecedented. It was condensed in time (1933-1945), reached its conspicuous apex at the Berlin Olympics in 1936, and was set on the road to destruction in 1939 (the start of WWII). The construction of an exemplary Soviet citizen extended over a period of 74 years (1917-1991), received a patriotic boost in 1945, was not overtly aggressive, and culminated at the 1980 Olympic Games. In contrast to the tarnished image of an Aryan, which is being deliberately erased from human memory, concerted attempts indeed are being made, at least when it comes to sport, to rejuvenate the DNA of a Soviet person in modern Russia. While Putin initially limited himself to the provision of 'bread and circuses' for the nation (SMEs as 'circuses'), Hitler and Stalin, undeniably, succeeded in creating a distinct type of exemplary citizen, exerting social control in the process. Through much-popularised training programmes, the youth was brought up to be loyal and subservient to the regime, with politically correct values instilled deep in their minds (Mertin, 2009; Keys, 2009). Such indoctrination was an effective mechanism of national identity construction, fit for the government's needs, an element strongly craved yet still missing in modern Russia.

An ideal man in Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia, born out of self-sacrificing service to the regime, with continuous perfection of the body, glorified during frequent mass demonstrations and rallies, whose superiority and an invincible image was endlessly promoted by propaganda, differed in several substantial elements. Firstly, in the Soviet state, an ideal type was culturally inclusive and subnational (Jeferries, 1987). For an Aryan type of man, an Ubermensch, physicality took priority over intellect (Keys, 2009). By contrast, the identity of a Soviet man was based on Marxist thinking, which attributed equal importance to body and mind (Grant, 2014; Peppard, 1982) or as underlined by *Izvestiia* in 1938 'not only [to] muscles but also [to] heart and mind' ('Parade of Young Patriots', *Izvestiia*, July 26,

1938, p.1). The next extract from the *Izvestiia* report about the 1937 *fizkultura* parade ('Festival of Youth and Strength', July 12, 1937, p.1), although it contrasts the Soviet system with the whole Western one, still indicates its ostensible major advantages and where it differed with the Nazis' concept of sport:

> Our Soviet *fizkultura* is a harmonious supplement to the comprehensive development of abilities, which we encourage in our youth. A bourgeois young man also practices sport and *fizkultura*, yet does it to the detriment of his spiritual development. We do not know such a one-sided direction of physical and sports development. Our athletes and *fizkulturniki* are usually good students, take part in a social life and grow culturally. They are accomplished personalities.

As observed by Washburn (1956, p.491), 'sport is alleged to have been placed at the service of the masses, to have increased their cultural growth and their well-being, and to have developed their spiritual and physical capabilities'. Moreover, it appears that initially sport in the USSR was amongst other things envisioned to resist masturbation and homosexuality that were seen as sexual deviations and sexual feelings specific to the bourgeois education and lifestyle (Ivanovsky, 1929). Despite sport's role in the liberation of several social strata, according to Grant (2010, p.150), 'the debates on Soviet *fizkul'tura* often touched upon broader debates surrounding the attitudes of young people, family, marriage, sexuality and the relationship between men and women'.

On the whole, contrary to several opinions about the despotic methods of these totalitarian regimes, listed norms and values were successfully instilled through persuasion and massive popularisation rather than through enforcement. In a way, these ideal types, cleverly engineered by the state, started to exhibit a contagious sort of SP within the discussed populations. The ingenuity of 'the Lenin-Stalin policy of nationalities' (Charchenko, *Izvestiia*, July 14, 1937, p.3) prominently on display during the annual *fizkultura* parades of the 1930s, for example, was that in addition to promoting mass participation in traditional football and

appropriating new disciplines like volleyball and basketball, it preserved the traditional pastimes of the minorities. Such cultural nationalism or 'official tolerance of national diversity which bordered on encouragement' (Sugden and Tomlinson, 2000, p.93) provided a form of comforting escapism in a rigidly controlled society, deceptively soothing co-option in the process. In the Soviet Union through facilitating the emancipation of population of 'culturally-backward nationalities' (Michailov, *Pravda*, August 12, 1928, p.1) including women from Muslim member-states, sport amongst other things engendered a type of egalitarian Soviet ethos (Abdulkarimov, 2004, p.90). According to Riordan (2012, p. 54), 'sport has acquired a unique meaning for ordinary people in terms of identity and Platonic 'empathy and catharsis'. Shipman, back in 1937 (p.82), described the situation as follows:

> Youths of the formerly nomadic denizens of the Kazakh steppe in Central Siberia are learning how to box. Tadzhik girls, who only a few short years ago dared not venture forth without their veils, are now taking part in track events, wearing the regulation outfit. From the Caucasus mountain fastnesses, from Central Asia, Kirghizia, the Far East, go forth thousands of young men and women to study at one of the state physical culture institutes, later to return to their people as instructors and coaches. Despite the emphasis on modern sports, however, the traditional forms of wrestling and other feats of strength and skill handed down through the generations are not lost sight of and are features of national celebrations.

In light of the preceding discussion of the Soviet social engineering project, *fizkultura* parades beg further attention. Thus, if the analysis of the Soviet press reports about the 1928 Spartakiad in Moscow reveals that then the emphasis was placed on creating a united common communist front as the utopia of the world revolution was still in the air (Michailov, *Pravda*, August 12, 1928, p.1), reports about the *fizkultura* parades of the late 1930s unambiguously attest to the fact that the focus had entirely shifted to the consecration of Stalin by the New Soviet Youth. In essence, from that time onwards, 'the day of celebration of youth, strength and the blossoming of national art' metamorphosed not so much into a resounding homage to the Soviet state but rather into the paeans of praise to 'caring' and

'loving' Stalin – 'the best friend of *fizkulturniki*' ('Festival of Youth and Strength', *Izvestiia*, July 12, 1937, p.1). In effect, the ethics of authoritarianism did then and just as much now demand the aesthetics of a pagan ritual. By the end of the second decade of the first socialist state's existence, what was left from the functions of sport in the 1920s, as manifest during the *fizkultura* parades, was that it was still predominantly viewed as a pool of reserves for the Red Army. Nonetheless, Soviet sport, as it must be given credit, was never coached as an instrument of aggression; hence in its infancy, it was on guard regarding the possible attacks of the imperialists. However, in the 1930s, in view of the imminent aggression of the 'fascists wormongers' (ibid), 'health and *masterstvo* [of *fizkulturniki*] at the first call of the Party, government and the Motherland [were] ready to be turned into a formidable, stormy force' (Sergeev, *Izvestiia*, July 14, 1937, p.3) in the name of the one 'who surrounded [them] with care and fatherly love, inspired [them] to new victories, led the country forward and for whom [they] were ready to give their lives – [their] chief, teacher and friend Comrade Stalin' (Charchenko, *Izvestiia*, July 14, 1937, p.3). Noteworthy here is, as Hitler's attack on the USSR drew closer, the *fizkultura* parades indicated an intensification of a militant rhetoric and signalled the final advent of an era of Stalin's cult of personality.

In the meantime, a common reference to Stalin was *Vozhd*', a title now exclusive to the leaders of the aboriginal tribes, and the pagan religiosity of the ritual prompted the secretary general of All-Union Leninist Young Communist League Aleksandr Kosarev to call *fizkulturniki* 'a mighty tribe of young fighters for communism ready to overcome all difficulties and obstacles' (*Izvestiia*, July 14, 1937, p.3). This new youth, effectively the New Soviet People, 'brought up, educated and hardened by the greatest fighter of socialism – the great Comrade Stalin' (ibid), should have possessed obvious advantages in a case of a possible 'clash of two worlds' ('Festival of Youth and Strength', *Izvestiia*, July 12, 1937, p.1).

Accordingly, *fizkultura* took centre stage in shaping the concept of the ideal young citizens of the 'country of liberated humanity' or as *Izvestiia* called them, reincarnated 'warriors of antiquity' ('Parade of Happy Youth', *Izvestiia*, July 24, 1938, p.1). The official role of *fizkultura* in this social engineering project of 'state importance' was eloquently acknowledged by the Soviet press (ibid):

> *Fizkultura* forges physically and spiritually strong people, facilitates development of honourable and heroic characters, and instils will to work and victories, selfless loyalty to the socialist Motherland, to the Party of Lenin-Stalin. Soviet *fizkultura* is also responsible for the birth of the new hero of our times.

Moreover, although individualism was not generally encouraged in the USSR, since the official sanctioning of sports stars in the 1930s, success stories of individual athletes, couched in politically correct terms and constructed from several socially approved templates, played into the mythologisation of the perfect Soviet hero, the New Soviet Person: 'fiercely loyal to the Motherland and to the Party, cultured, healthy and politically savvy' ('Festival of Youth and Strength', *Izvestiia*, July 12, 1937, p.1). According to Mertin (2009, p.475):

> They were the prototypes of well-educated, physically healthy citizens from simple working families, leading normal lives, experiencing the unique conditions of Communist society to fulfil their most sincere goals to serve their country and contribute to building a communist society.

The mounting significance of the distinguished athletes in the national imagination was determined not entirely by their sporting prowess, but also because at the height of the Cold War, they were seen as real 'sports diplomats' defending their Motherland's reputation in the uncompromising fight with capitalism, epitomised by the USA. The highest designation of a patriotic elite athlete, as a result, was 'breaking of the records [which] redounded to the glory of the motherland' (Peppard, 1982, p.25). Public attention to both geopolitical rivalry and the role of sport in it was so pervasive, that even now:

> Images of heroes of national sport, sports victories significantly gravitate (in the collective imagination) towards the Soviet era – nostalgically constructed Brezhnev times – a period, as regarded by the majority of Russians, of the highest social integration and balance, of openly outwardly projected strength and global authority (Dubin, 2004, p.79).

This is hardly surprising though, as since 'the Soviet *fizkultura* and sport became part of the ideology of the totalitarian state in 30s-50s' (Gridina and Gridin, 2013), a massive propaganda machine has been placed at their service. Significantly, cinema, prudently pronounced by Lenin as 'the most important of all the arts' (Lenin, 1934), has played a large role in the popularisation of sport and in the indoctrination of the New Soviet Person, with all the revolutionary values espoused by him/her. Although sports films have only ever been a minor genre and those made were few and far between and usually of low quality, such films as *The Goalkeeper* (*Vratar*, 1936), a story of a brilliant goalkeeper from a humble background, and *A Chance Encounter* (*Sluchainaya Vstrecha*, 1936), portraying a resilient working girl who succeeded in sport despite the blows of fate, became iconic and were an inspiration for many future sports stars. Apart from presenting role models, these early pictures raised several important questions, both social and strategic. In *The Goalkeeper*, for example, the militarisation tendency on the eve of war was subtly conveyed through the main character's image of 'the guard of the Motherland gates' (Gridina and Gridin, 2013, p.347). Consequently, *A Chance Encounter* was a part of the reappraisal of the role of women on the silver screen, which began at the end of the 1920s (Grant, 2010). Starting with *The Man with a Movie Camera* (*Chelovek s Kinnoapparatom*, 1929), the ideal female was presented as 'a working-woman, a sportswoman, a record-holder' (Attwood, 1993, p.162).

Whereas the importance of collective effort, a founding principle of the Soviet system, was indeed emphasised in the sports films, the individual as an embodiment of 'perfect training, sterling moral character and selfless motivation' was also praised (Shaw and Youngblood,

2017, p.179). In the uplifting Soviet comedies, sport predictably was shown as a vehicle of social mobility, a medium of character building, with 'the implicit message being that the superiority of Soviet sporting values leads to triumph' (ibid, p.180). The image of the Soviet athlete promoted by the film industry was of someone who was 'an amateur by status and a professional by the level of achievement' (Sheveleva, 2015, p.38). As a result, on several occasions sports films, reflecting the propagandistic challenges, rebuffed the criticism of the West, like *Goal! Another Goal* (*Udar, Eshche Udar*, 1968), where the coach repudiates insinuations about the amateur status of the Soviet athletes. Explicitly harsh disapproval of the West, however, was uncommon for Soviet sports films. Since the 1970s and principally with the onset of perestroika and the debunking of socialist values, rare sports films, which by that time had evolved into gloomy dramas, followed the general trend of discrediting the system and with unforgiving pathos exposed its deficiencies. One of the most memorable and provocative pictures was *The Dolly* (*Kukolka*, 1987), which touched on the notorious issue of children's exploitation and the inhuman realties of elite sport. 'A devastating, highly sensationalised critique of the Soviet 'women's' gymnastic system' (Shaw and Youngblood, 2017, p.190), it was a story of a young girl, who after her career is put on hold due to an injury, commits suicide, unable to adjust to the alien realties of ordinary life. The focus of the sports films of the final days of the USSR, mirroring the general tendency, shifted towards showing the most compromising material; they completely lost their educational and motivational effect as well as their potential audiences.

In light of the preceding discussion, the emphasis placed on sport in the Soviet Union as a failure-free tool to revitalise and cleanse society from the inglorious remnants of the chaotic past, transcends social and cultural barriers, or simply 'destroy everything old and sordid that obstructs the growth of the new and pure proletarian culture' (Washburn, 1956, p.491). Such

ideas had historical precedence, for example, in the Weimar Republic after the First World War, where social purification was attempted at a scientific level. Likewise, historical records show that as a trigger for patriotism, sport started to be used in Germany as far back as 1811 (Mertin, 2009, p.402). Yet it was first in the USSR that sport was put at the service of domestic politics to the extent that:

> The many sports parades which constituted a background to the sport contests were intended to create a 'togetherness' and a patriotic feeling. Significantly, sports rallies often began to accompany major political events and festivals (May Day, Anniversary of the Revolution, Constitution Day), thereby linking members of the public, through sport, with politics, the Party and, of course, the nation's leader, Joseph Stalin (Riordan, 2012, p. 60).

Despite the controversial and partisan use of elite sport by the USSR for foreign policy purposes, there were several noteworthy accomplishments to its credit. Unlike in capitalist societies, where sport only entrenched social stratification with several pursuits being exclusive to the upper classes and white males, in the USSR sport encouraged social mobility and racial and gender equality (Riordan, 2007a; Jeferries, 1987). Whilst in the West sport helped to sustain and reproduce status and was a type of conspicuous consumption, in the Soviet state it was instrumentalised to achieve the complete opposite: to serve as a means of democratisation and to abolish any sort of distinction not based on personal achievement and merit (Sugden and Tomlinson, 2000; Peppard, 1982). This was conducted with the aid of two main principles: '*massovost*' (mass participation) and '*masterstvo*' (mastery), with the former responsible for a fit nation and a large pool of resources, from which particularly able people were selected and trained to reach the highest levels of '*masterstvo*' (Washburn, 1956). *Masterstvo*, in turn, was controlled by the 'Unified Sports Classification System of the USSR', which was introduced in the period between 1935 and 1937 and regulated the

achievement of qualifications in different sports. A Soviet novelty, this system expedited the integration of Soviet sport into the world's elite (Gridina and Gridin, 2013).

Sport was almost a single arena where communist states stood on a par with capitalist societies and presented a rare opportunity to capture global attention by peaceful means, which inflated its strategic importance for the ruling elites. Thus, in contrast to the North American sports system where anarchy reigned supreme, one central feature of Soviet sport was its 'militarisation' or the military patronage of leading clubs and centralised control over sports development (Dubin, 2004). The scale of the Party's preoccupation with sport is evident from the investment figures which, in the run up to the Moscow Olympics for example, approximated 7.6 billion roubles annually. In terms of amenities, there were 2,895 stadia, 42,000 gymnasia, 1,231 swimming pools, 90,000 football pitches, etc. by 1975 alone (Howell, 1975, p.141).

International success, in turn, came under major pressure from above, sparing no individual in the face of the country's prestige and welfare. This was particularly evident in the 1930s and 1940s when the 'besieged fortress' paranoia was particularly strong and a military affiliation became the reason for many sports figures being persecuted for being foreign spies (Grant, 2013). Therefore, despite the strategic significance of elite sport, or on the contrary because of it, repressions, another inalienable symbol of Stalin's rule, were organised against the athletes. According to Riordan (2007a, p.548):

> No one knows the precise number of victims; but the Stalin-enforced Terror carried off five sports ministers, heads of the major sports colleges, eminent sports scientists, and medics, and probably thousands of leading sports-people.

Condemning oppressive methods, several experts nevertheless acknowledge the superiority of the Soviet sports model (Edelman, 1993; Riordan, 2007). Jefferies (1987), for example,

amongst the factors that made the Soviet sport structure superior to that of the USA, lists strong government support, both financial and administrative, the existence of national standards, which accounted for minimum qualifications amongst the coaches, and the professional education of elite coaches as well as the promotion of mass participation. Moreover, he posits that centrally organised sports structures starting from the grassroots level, combined with the relative scarcity of alternative pastimes, although extremely criticised in the West, might have been at the core of Soviet athletic prowess.

4.4 Sport and the Continuity of Russia's Foreign Policy

A permanent medium of Soviet foreign policy, sport has enjoyed fluctuating significance over the time periods, taking into account the expediency of the goals it has pursued and the global political developments (Riordan, 1974). Overall, right from the start, Soviet sport was entrusted with 'two apparently mutually exclusive goals simultaneously: the expansion of peaceful coexistence and friendship, and the establishment of hegemony in the realm of ideological conflict' (Peppard, 1982, p. 26).

Although the Soviet Union was at the origin of serious sports diplomacy (Bogolubova and Nikolaeva, 2012), the infancy of the Soviet state was marked by limited involvement in international sporting competitions, contingent in scarce material, financial, and inadequately prepared human resources. More concerned with the establishment of stability and the consolidation of communist rule domestically than the attainment of international recognition, the ruling elite pursued a defensive foreign policy, with sport following in their footsteps. In terms of the diplomatic goals entrusted to sport, this period coincides with what Riordan (1974) describes as the restrained promotion of pro-Soviet forces abroad, and the opposition to liberal democracy and capitalism. It characterised Soviet sports contacts in the period until 1937 and after the introduction of the 'peaceful coexistence' policy in 1953. At this time, the

Soviet Union championed the establishment of the Red Sportintern (1921-1937), which was used for spreading revolutionary ideas and strengthening its international position. A counterweight to the 'bourgeois' sports movement, the organisation reached 70 states by 1924, and by 1927 its membership exceeded three million people (Bogolubova and Nikolaeva, 2012, p.109).

Emblematic of the pre-war period were exchanges with communist organisations, trade and professional associations, and Spartakiads. They were succeeded by the World Festivals of Youth and Students and the World Student Games or Universiads, where the Soviet athletes dominated during the 'peaceful coexistence' in the 1960s. Initially not an active player in the international sports arena, the Soviet Union was still willing to learn from the best and acquire international experience, inasmuch as the socialist goals were observed. The contacts that took place in the pre-war years, apart from demonstrating the dominant vector of Soviet foreign policy at the time, were also among the first Soviet experiments in PD:

> Foreign experts were invited to demonstrate their prowess and teach to the Russians. France has led in this respect, sending over in recent years, among others, Jules Ladoumegue, the long-distance running champion, Marcel Thil, the middleweight boxer, and Henri Cochet, the tennis expert. Soviet soccer football players, swimmers, boxers, wrestlers, ice skaters, and basketball players have made frequent trips abroad to engage workers' organisations in Turkey, France, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Estonia, Czechoslovakia, Belgium and Finland, usually with conspicuous success. In turn, they have played host to athletes from most of these countries. Corresponding to the political situation, sports relations with Turkey are particularly cordial (Shipman, 1937, p.83-84).

France was a particularly cordial and reliable sports partner in the 1920s. Importantly, a number of Soviet athletes took part in the French Resistance movement during WWII, including a famous Ukrainian wrestler, Vasily Porik. In turn, a French track-and-field champion, Andre Jacques, was named Hero of the Soviet Union for his chivalry in the Normandie-Nieman Regiment. Although there was a short standoff in cooperation with the

start of the Cold War, the sports encounters soon resumed. Kravchenko (1981, p.10), in this respect, concludes that:

> Development of the Soviet-French sports ties – is an example of a practical realization of the peaceful foreign policy of the Soviet Union, which is based on the Lenin's principle of peaceful coexistence with a different social order.

Overall, as summarised by Peppard and Riordan (1993, p. 48):

> By the early stages of Soviet history, sport diplomacy had shown that when it was employed in advantageous and appropriate circumstances it had great resiliency as a means of conducting foreign policy.

After the formation of the Warsaw Pact after the war, the Soviet Union was faced with the need for strengthening its influence over not particularly forthcoming or obedient satellites by all means possible, including sport (Peppard, 1982). The binding character of such PD bordering on coercive was set in stone by innumerable agreements. Despite the presence of a common ideological enemy, and the fact that by 1971 67 per cent of the Soviet sports encounters were within the socialist camp, the USSR's overt demonstration of superiority and reluctance to share knowledge, as well as the hostility of the general public towards 'subjugating' Russians, clearly illustrate the failure of such diplomacy in consolidating the socialist ranks (Kobierecki, 2016, p.15). In effect, the USSR tried to hide its preoccupation with hard power and anxiety about the brittle structure of the Socialist camp behind the soft façade of sports encounters. Therefore, as part of military integration:

> A Sports Committee of Friendly Armies (SCFA) was formed in Moscow in 1958, three years after the establishment of the Warsaw Pact. It embraced all members of the Pact plus China, North Korea and North Vietnam. Neither the Pact nor the SCFA included Yugoslavia. Cuba joined the SCFA in 1969 and the Somali Democratic Republic in 1973; China, Albania and North Vietnam took no part in it after 1960. The declared aims of the SCFA are 'to strengthen friendship between the armies, improve the quality of physical fitness and sport among servicemen and popularise the attainments of army sport' (Riordan, 1974, p.338).

The maintenance of good neighbour relationships with the states historically in the geopolitical orbit of Russia, such as the Baltic, Balkans and Middle Eastern states, has, likewise, been one of sport's diplomatic functions. Soviet leadership has encouraged sporting encounters that have, as a rule, mirrored the official foreign policy line. With the Middle East moving to the forefront of the USSR's attention in 1969, a number of Sports Cooperation Treaties were signed with Egypt (1969), Syria, Algeria and Iraq (1972), and Lebanon (1973) (Riordan, 1974, p. 339). Sporting relationships with such nations as Afghanistan, Mongolia, North Korea, and China were complicated either by the abysmal state of sport or politically intricate situations. Therefore, the participation of ethnic minorities or Soviet local teams against national teams of these states prevented humiliation by an athletically superior USSR and stimulated a good neighbourly policy.

In the pre-soft power days, the Soviets became adept at exerting their cultural influence, promoting their political values and institutions in the developing world. This was carried out often with a view to pitching sympathising nations against their capitalist neighbours, such as Cuba and the Latin American countries against the USA. In this respect, the Soviets turned the sport of Afro-Asian friends into their political weapons against their capitalist foes. The scale of assistance provided confirms the importance of the region in the USSR's diplomatic agenda and points out the fact that the USSR's pool of friends has always been rather exclusive and ideologically grounded. Committed to continuity and tradition, modern Russia is not spreading itself too thin and picks up diplomatically where the USSR has left off (for a detailed discussion of the diplomatic roles of sport in Russia, see chapter 9). Judging by the pattern of the USSR's international involvement, in this case exemplified and corroborated through sport, it can be assumed that Russian SP promotion, apart from the members of the Warsaw Pact, has always gravitated towards the Afro-Asian region and Latin America.

Although Russia's current diplomatic stature confirms this point (Foreign Policy Concept 2016), this trend is still ambiguous in sport, in view of limited concerted efforts to engage with these regions.

As is apparent from the literature, sport served different political objectives in the Soviet state. Therefore, if before WWII the main emphasis was on defence and the mobilisation of the masses for Marxist causes (Howell, 1975; Popov, 1997), with the onset of the Cold War sport came to be seen as a serious instrument of the worldwide promotion of communist values and a vehicle to affirm the stature of the USSR (Larshina, p.221). The goal of strengthening the Soviet position through sport was stated during the meeting of the sports organisations of Ukraine on March 15, 1946. It was declared that 'the work should be organised so that in the sports arena of international relations we could be worthy of the increased authority of our country' (Gridina and Gridin, 2013, p.348).

The first sign of 'assertiveness' in sport came when the USSR joined FIFA in 1946 following a glorious unbeaten tour of Dynamo Moscow of the United Kingdom just after the war in 1945 (Sugden and Tomlinson, 2000). Yet this stage commenced in earnest when the USSR increased its membership regarding athletic bodies from only two in 1946 to 27 by 1955, and finally joined the Olympic movement in 1951 (Washburn, 1956). It was a drastic change from the sporting 'isolationism' of the pre-war years caused by ideological considerations and athletic insecurities with regard to the capitalist counterparts.

Moreover, despite the entrenched geopolitical rivalry between the USSR and the USA, since 1957 when the first USA-USSR Dual Track Meet Series were held, both states on numerous occasions have resorted to sport as a PD vehicle to test the ground for further cooperation as well as to mark several successful political initiatives (Peppard and Riordan, 1993). *Izvestiia's*

observation about the competitions in 1959 that 'in one week there were more genuinely friendly feelings on display than in Geneva in the course of a couple of months'[3] (*Izvestiia*, 1959, July 21, p.4), captures the symbolism and potential of these competitions in bringing the two nations together. The public diplomacy initiative of these 'Matches of Giants' in 'maintaining and strengthening the good relations that exist[ed] between the athletes of the USA and the Soviet Union' (Rubin, *Izvestiia*, 1958, July, 29, p.4) fell on fertile ground first and foremost due to the absence of an identity-deep schism between the peoples as well as the regular long-term nature of the meets, which gave both sides an opportunity to learn from and to get to know each other. As a result, a typical observation of the Soviet press about the events was that the 'athletes of the two states in record-breaking shirt time found common ground' (*Izvestiia*, 1959, July 21, p.4), which by no means deserved praise itself. The next account of the distance finish in the 20 kilometres race walk by Leonid Spirin and his counterpart Huston accurately captures the overall spirit of the meets: '[Spirin] met his opponent literally with open arms. Embracing each, other they run together for no less than 200 meters. Such examples of friendship were manifold' (Rubin, *Izvestiia*, 1958, July, 29, p.4).

Soviet sports envoys were sent not only to the West to show the 'human face' of communism, such as for example in 1972 when Olga Korbut and Ludmila Turishcheva conducted a gymnastic display tour of North America as a part of what Riordan calls 'an intensive campaign for a détente with the USA and as a prelude to President Nixon's visit to Moscow'(1974, pp. 335-336), but also to friendly states, such as for example to India, when in 1973 the football star Yashin and a famous tennis player Metreveli visited the country with

[3] Reference is made to the Geneva foreign minister's conference on the reunification of Germany where no consensus was eventually reached.

a Soviet delegation prior to the official state visit of Brezhnev (*Sovietskii Sport*, November 25, 1973, p.4).

Despite several significant examples of sports diplomacy, this stage, however, is remembered due to classical uncompromising rivalries, which were initiated between the USSR and the USA, socialism and capitalism, the legacy of which in a number of sports lives on today. Such sports, for example, include basketball after the incredible victory of the Soviet team in the last seconds of the 1972 Olympics final, a story which recently on the wave of insinuations against Russian sport was turned into an emotional patriotic movie, *Going Vertical* (*Dvijenie Vverch*). Another such sport is hockey due to a number of exhibitions and to a great extent after a bitter loss by the US amateur team in the final rounds of the 1980 Olympics, a Miracle on Ice which, in turn, on numerous occasions was put on screen in the USA. Overall, the USSR's participation in the Olympics and in the 1980 Summer Games it hosted, taking into account the Afghan War controversy, symbolised an assertive and uncompromising policy towards the West.

The Sochi Olympics and the 2018 FIFA WC, in this respect, are not novel elements of the assertive foreign policy of the 21st century, which also includes the 2008 war with Georgia, the 2014 annexation of Crimea, and the Ukrainian conflict (Tsygankov, 2014). The pursuit of SP gains, therefore, which may be more characteristic of a cooperation stage, although not in the Russian case, is somewhat in conflict with assertiveness in the global arena.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter offered an in-depth analysis of the political and social tasks sport was entrusted with in the Soviet Union. It also provided an insight into what considerations motivate the Russian leadership to methodologically appropriate attainments and inventions of the Soviet

sports system. The GTO set, top-down facilitation of mass participation, state rewards to elite athletes are but a few Soviet legacies which found their way into post-Soviet Russia. As was shown throughout this chapter the government not only vies for legitimacy and attempts to uphold its approval rates among other things through a tried-and-tested mechanism of the elite sport but also satisfies a popular demand for a 'togetherness'. This popular demand also extends to new moral references embodied by modern sporting stars. The qualities they represent bear a close resemblance to the sporting heroes of the Soviet times and by analogy provide a template for a new Hero of Our Times. Such an implicit social engineering project, in turn, as will be exhaustively shown in the empirical chapters, is in full compliance with what the ruling elite wants from its citizens.

By no means limited to successes in sport, this modernised national narrative necessarily draws upon a glorious tradition. In this respect, SMEs for Russia do not seem so much a part and parcel of staying competitive in the global economy of spectacle or exercising 'the politics of attraction' as a convenient opportunity to bring back what worked so well in the past. The point in question is that the emphasis the government places on elite sports development and on hosting SMEs is first and foremost an endeavour to strengthen a fusion between the peoples and the national leader, Vladimir Putin. International image promotion via SMEs if not entirely leaves the government's agenda in view of the ostracism Russia currently faces, then becomes entirely a matter of PD, that is people-to-people diplomacy or depends on every particular contact with locals and the impression they leave.

As will be futher demonstrated throughout the thesis, sport continues to represent a battleground for different modernities, economic systems, and political regimes. Mirroring this trend, the Sochi Olympics stands out for a number of reasons, including it being the first Olympics since the 1936 Games in Berlin to be closely associated with a figure of one man,

Vladimir Putin in this case, and the first Games since the end of the Cold War to be mired in that much political controversy due to the timing and as later emerged to the doping scandal. In what follows, after introducing the research methodology, the author discusses both the diplomatic functions and internal objectives of the Moscow'80 Olympics in view of the Afghan war, as well as analyses the role of hard and soft power in Soviet and Russian identity in different temporal and geopolitical circumstances, and in the context of the Sochi Olympics.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

As this research has shown, Russia's primary and overarching objectives and strategy in relation to SME hosting appear to be directed inwards towards a domestic audience rather than externally. Thus, based on the literature reviewed, and in an attempt to understand the political and ideological goals (an analytical frame or object of this research project) behind SMEs in Russia, a prima facie research question was formulated as follows:

- In what respect is Russia an 'outlier' case in hosting SMEs?

The subsequent questions, guiding an inquiry and providing a holistic, multidimensional approach to the issue were formulated not least following the analysis of the author's pertinent ontological and epistemological positions and included:

- How and why is Russian understanding of Soft Power different from Nye's initial concept?
- What role do SMEs play in the construction of a new Russian national identity?
- Can the 2014 Sochi Olympics be considered a success in terms of their Soft Power promotion/identity construction functions?

In the remainder of the chapter the author offers an analysis of her attendant philosophical positions, which is logically followed by argumentative methodological considerations and justification of research methods and sources choices.

5.2 Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions

The current study is firmly rooted in an interpretivist tradition. As such, it assumes a time,-context-, and culture-constrained nature of the issue studied, therefore it does not aim at achieving predictability or generalisability of the data gathered. Equally, the author does not subscribe to the notion of bias-free and objective research. According to Rathbun (2012,

p.610) our values ‘create an interest in studying particular topics and predispose us toward the adoption of paradigms that give us better traction on questions [about the nature of the world, both in politics and in international relations theory]’. In addition to claiming that a paradigm adoption above all reasoning is an ‘individual-level choice’ rooted in one’s political ideology, and, as a result, defies objectivity of any research as such, Rathbun (2012, p.608) recognises the prevalence of agency in the constructivist approach. Paradigm choice, in turn, also affects one’s ‘belief system’, making research a cyclical interactive process, where paradigm, epistemology and ideology are inextricably intertwined. As a result, the author needs to admit that besides choosing a research issue on the basis of her values and interests, her further investigation was also influenced by prior knowledge, experiences and ideological beliefs. The subjectivity of this research was also conditioned by the problem of the ‘double hermeneutic’ or mutual construction of reality, whereby a researcher interprets interpretations of the interviewees about the social reality in question (Geertz, 1983; Grix, 2002). The fact that this project purported to uncover intangible constructs, such as elite beliefs, interests and values etc. behind SMEs in Russia places it within the social constructivist realm, with its emphasis on agency (Hopf, 1998). The author’s constructivist affiliation and interpretivist stance, assuming active participation in research, was meant to contribute to cultural sensitivity and particular scrutiny to the issue studied and thus the validity of the findings, albeit at the expense of reliability and generalisability of the data.

5.3 Social Constructivism as a Theory of Choice

In the neo-realist world the ‘raison d'être’ of the state and rational interest were reduced exclusively to survival and the accumulation of material capabilities (Waltz, 1979), thereby stripped from the classical realist consideration of prestige and reputation (Morgenthau, 1946; Carr, 2001). Neoclassical realists, albeit having revived the significance of intangibles and

putting their interest in ideology and domestic politics, as motivators of the state's foreign policy, still see structure of the system as an all-defining constraint (Tsygankov, 2012, p.18; Rose, 1998; Christensen, 1996; Schweller, 1998; Wohlforth, 94/95, 1999; Zakaria, 1998). This inclusion, therefore, has not become a game changer in the theory of IR, since state identity has still been considered of secondary importance and denied the role of a significant independent variable. Since the times of Morgenthau, Clausewitz and Thucydides identity has not earned a meaningful place in the realist picture of IR (Morgenthau, 1946, 1954; Lebow, 2008).

Social constructivism, on the other hand, as a structural theory of IR, presupposes that reality is constrained only by imagination and addresses such intangibles as 'identities, norms, understandings, sentiments and subjective beliefs' (Lezaun, 2002, p.234). What made constructivism particularly useful for this study, therefore, is its preoccupation with states as the units of analysis, the intersubjective character of their identities and interests and their propensity for change (Wendt, 1994, p. 385; Hopf, 1998). Social constructivism is not meant as a tool to 'explain social change' but rather to elaborate on 'the specific content of this change' (Lezaun, 2002, p.230). In this way it is less at odds with the realist theories and more like a complementary position to them (Green and Bogard, 2012). Advocating the intersubjective and social structure of reality, constructivism does not dispute the prospect of scientific explanation, which makes it occupy a 'middle ground' among the plethora of IR theories (Zehfuss, 2001, p.340). What sets constructivism apart from realism before all else is that the former rests on the notion that not only is reality a social phenomenon but it also lends itself to change especially when identities and interests are concerned. Following this logic, interests, identities and states likewise are 'constructed by historically contingent

interactions' (Wendt, 1994, p.385) or a variable dependent on 'historical, cultural, political, and social context' (Hopf, 1998, p.176).

Constructivism also fundamentally differs from neorealism in its view of what constitutes the structure (Morgenthau, 1954; Waltz, 1979). Structure for realists is predominantly anarchic and material, while for constructivists, in addition to material resources, it includes shared knowledge and practices and is discursive (Copeland, 2000, p.187; Hopf, 1998). These immaterial elements, in turn, define actors' identities, interests and behaviour, and consequently, whether their interaction will be based on conflict or cooperation (Wendt, 1994; Hopf, 2010). In a nutshell, social constructivism in IR prioritises shared knowledge and common meaning over physical capabilities (Ruggie, 1998; Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001; Adler and Pouliot, 2011), and, thus, is essentially intersubjective and 'idea-ist' in contrast to realism in that it emphasises the role of ideas (Mearsheimer, 2011). Although still important, material capabilities are reduced to social contexts, where they are found and the meaning attributed to them accordingly (Wendt, 1994; Risse, 2011).

Social constructivism holds that national identity of a state from time to time finds itself in a state of revision, thus ultimately causing an adjustment of an SP proposition. During the post-Soviet transitional years the West, for example, has evolved from Russia's 'aspirational Other' to Russia's 'dissociative Other' (Hopf, 2010). Citing Larson and Shevchenko, Fosberg *et al.* (2014, p. 266) posit that 'Russia was not successful in its social mobility strategy to join the West because the latter put too many obstacles in the Russian path to becoming an accepted part of the West', which disregarding Russia as an indispensable partner and defying it an equal status finally hit it where it hurts most – at its self-esteem (Clunan, 2014). As a result, Russia's objectives have moved from desiring to 'assume a place in the Western hegemony' and, thus, rejection of any 'universalising mission' (Hopf, 2010, p.338), to

rediscovery of its own ambitious path and aspiration to counter the existing hegemony. Articulation of a more or less concrete version of a national identity would also give an impetus to a modernisation and coherence of the Russian SP project. However, demonisation of Russian identity as 'revisionist' and 'imperialist' in addition to being inaccurate and ignorantly simplistic, dismisses the existence of Russian SP as such. For Russia SMEs are a form of modern post-Cold-War soft balancing, which assuming the ascendancy of SP debate, moves into the terrain of albeit intangible but pivotal domains such as beliefs, values, norms, culture and crucially identity.

Soft balancing builds upon SP of a particular state and works through a portfolio of diplomatic, economic and institutional levers. Russia does not use SMEs 'to delay, frustrate, and undermine' (Pape, 2005, p.10) the influence of the leading states in the West. It appears, nonetheless, that Russia views SMEs as an exceptional opportunity to showcase its culture and civilisational role to offset the cultural and normative authority of the West in what it sees as its 'near abroad' and over its own people. Therefore, whereas soft balancing per se is a realist strategy, balancing through SP mechanisms, like SMEs, is, however, more within the perspective of social constructivism.

According to social constructivism, identity is a social construct based on pertinent theories. Not only do interests stem from actors' identities, but they are also context-dependent, in that they are formulated on the basis of actors' interpretation of events (Hopf, 1998). As a rule, situations have historic precedents and actors behave by analogy (Wendt, 1992, p.399). The Sochi Olympics per se were not an unprecedented event given that their meaning, social and political functions were articulated and promoted by the elites well in advance (kremlin.ru, 2014). The attendant geopolitical context, however, was, which forced Russian leadership to

accommodate their behaviour, interests and henceforth, identity rhetoric as a matter of exigency.

The aftermath of the Sochi Olympics with its unfavourable geopolitical context and international sanctions against Russia due to its position over Ukraine coincided with the consolidation of the majority of the population around the president and intensification of the ideologically-loaded national discourse (wciom, 2015; Fish, 2014). From the constructivist stance this situation is in accordance with the words of Anderson (1983, p.387) that 'dependence of states on their societies may be such that they cultivate nationalist sentiments in order to solidify their corporate identities vis-à-vis each other'. While Wendt (1994, p.386), is mostly interested in systemic antecedents of state identities he, nevertheless, agrees that:

> Some state identities and interests stem primarily from relations to domestic society ('liberal', 'democratic'), others from international society ('hegemon', 'balancer'). Foreign policy theorists (eg. S. Walker 1997), as well as more recently a number of neoliberals, have emphasised domestic (and thus systemically exogenous) roots of state identities.

Although the international system was initially viewed by constructivists as pivotal for identities and interests (Wendt, 1992), recently 'domestic level constructivists [posit] that states may change because of domestic processes independent of international interaction' (Copeland, 2000, p.188). In a more restrained manner Tsygankov (2012, p.22) argues that 'domestic-level variables' such as culture, economy and politics as well as 'the memory of the past interactions with its external environment', perhaps particularly defining in Russia's case, generate 'a social purpose, or a system of meaning in which to act'.

To sum up, Russia is an outlier case where a peculiar combination of domestic and international factors intensely contributes to the formation of the new state identity (Hopf, 2005). Russian leadership seems to acutely realise an argument that 'the ability of the states to

create new worlds in the future depends on the old ones they created in the past' (Wendt, 1994, p.389) and lapses into all-encompassing historical referencing. At the same time, it understands that a new identity necessarily has to involve 'a difference with itself' (Derrida, 1992, p.72). Through the magnifying glass of the Sochi Olympics the dynamic duality of the domestic/international identity building process, which has been going for some time in Russia, has become visible to the global public. In view of the first and foremost inward-directed nature of the Sochi Olympics messages, the pursuit of domestic SP through them (Grix and Kramareva, 2015), it is the local process of identity construction in what Tsygankov (2012) calls a recovering great power that required particular attention in this research.

In addition to studying identities, social constructivism sets out to explain ensuing social roles of the states on the international arena and attendant foreign policy (Wendt, 1992). Emotionally-driven foreign policy decisions, and in particular when Russia is concerned, honour-motivated decisions, albeit integral to the state's diplomacy have been not accounted for by realism. Realism seeks rational explanation in situations where it is a priori absent. In order to predict the vector of the foreign policy of the state it is necessary to understand 'the meanings and emotions' (Reus Smit, 1999; Wendt, 1992) as well as 'beliefs about the moral purpose of the state' (Tsygankov, 2012, p.19) of individual societies. Understanding of emerging Russian identity will shed light on and lend some degree of predictability to the dynamics of Russian interests and, as a result, behaviour, since from the constructivist standpoint identities define interests (Hopf, 1998; Ruggie, 1998).

5.4 Case Study

Case study design is above all useful for uncovering the complexity and uniqueness of the phenomenon. Among the most widespread case studies are investigations of a single event. In SMEs research, likewise, case study of the particular FIFA WC or the Olympic Games is

the most viable research approach by virtue of the scale and distinctiveness of such events, rendering sweeping generalisations unsuitable and inadequate. Besides, case study as a research approach is especially congruent with social constructivism as an undergirding ontological standpoint in this project. Indeed, to Guba and Lincoln (1990, p.54):

> Any case study is a construction itself, a product of the interaction between respondents, site and researcher. As such, the construction is rooted in the person, character, experience, context, and philosophy of the constructor.

Case study, however, with its attention to tacit practices and context, provides an opportunity to transcend prevailing 'constructions and understandings' (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Punch, 1985).

Aiming to make a valuable contribution to the SMEs scholarship through an exhaustive analysis of the political aspects of the 2014 Sochi Olympics and drawing on the existing practice in the field, the author chose a case study as an 'organisational strategy' (Grix, 2010) for this project.

By adopting such an idiographic approach (Bryman, 2012) the author's primary objective was to elucidate 'outlier' characteristics of Russia as a host of SMEs. The author also intended to add value to the findings by comparing and discussing them against the pertinent 'wider body of academic research' (Grix, 2010). Subsequently, by establishing commonalities and differences among previously investigated phenomena and the one at hand the author made an attempt to enrich emerging theory. At the cost of external generalisability and validity of its findings, which is the main criticism of this type of research design (Abercrombie *et al*., 1984; Campbell and Stanley, 1966), this study was supposed to produce a holistic understanding of the political context of SMEs in Russia. Guba and Lincoln (1990), however, warn against making generalisations in case study reports, arguing that nomothetic conclusions or recommendations compromise integrity and essence of such a research approach. Similar

opinion is expressed by Lisa Peattie (2001, p.260) who insists that: 'It is simply that the very value of the case study, the contextual and interpenetrating nature of forces, is lost when one tries to sum up in large and mutually exclusive concepts.' Campbell (1975, p.179), the most radical of case study exponents, goes so far as to declare that regardless of how 'noisy, fallible, and biased', it in fact represents our 'only route to knowledge'. Indeed, rebutting traditional reproaches of case study, Flyvbjerg (2006, p.5) claims that it is precisely 'context-independent knowledge' which stands in the way of acquiring true expertise, and, thus, is 'the limitation of analytical rationality'. He (Flyvbjerg 2006, p. 13) goes on to argue that it is still possible to generalise based on the findings of a single case study, albeit 'formal generalisation is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas the ''force of example'' is underestimated'. Here, outlier cases, of which in terms of SMEs hosting Russia is an example, are of particular significance, since:

> Atypical or extreme cases often reveal more information because they activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied. In addition, from both an understanding-oriented and an action-oriented perspective, it is often more important to clarify the deeper causes behind a given problem and its consequences than to describe the symptoms of the problem and how frequently they occur (ibid).

Thus, the author's main concern was to generate solid theory on the basis of this particular case, even if not essentially transferable to other cultural and political settings. This type of outcome is referred to as 'analytic generalisation' (Yin, 2009) or 'theoretical generalisation' (Mitchell and Cody, 1993) and is traditionally achieved through embracing inductive approach and qualitative methods. More specifically the process of induction is expounded by Patton (1980, p. 306):

> Inductive analysis means that the patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis.

Accordingly, the author followed an inductive research strategy in order to build theory on the basis of empirical data (Ragin, 1992, 2004).

It was also essential to distinguish the unit of analysis and the attendant level of analysis based on the research questions of this thesis. In order to avoid ecological fallacy or false generalisations based on the mismatch between the unit and level of analysis, the unit of analysis for this project was formulated as follows: 'Evaluation of Russian SP, nation-building and identity formation through the 2014 Sochi Olympics'. The research, therefore, dealt with the macro level of analysis. Definition of the level of analysis is pivotal for methods selection in that it 'determines what evidence is considered permissible and hence guides fieldwork process and underscores the way in which the data are ultimately interpreted' (ibid, p.69). It is therefore a form of inclusion/exclusion criteria (Grix, 2010, p.48).

5.5 Theory Generation

Informed by the interpretivist tradition, this study sought to generate theory from the findings and did not follow the reasoning of other research paradigms that theory is the 'driving force of research' (Grix, 2010, p.108). Due to the design of this project the theory was largely built on the basis of beliefs, ideas and reflections of the interviewees, which contrary to the structure-leaning macro-level of analysis adopted, lend due credit to the agency.

Choice of a case study as a research design, underlying constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology as well as ensuing choice of qualitative methods provided a good fit or congruence with the research problem and attendant context. Such a 'value resonance' (Guba and Lincoln, 1983, p.239) should have technically brought to pass meaningful, insightful findings. Grounded theory, in turn, was the most viable way of ensuring this value resonance.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1983, p.250), one of the values of constructivism as a paradigm, is that it allows for the flexible and interdependent research, inasmuch as it 'unfolds as the human instrument discovers new knowledge and reshapes inquiry to fit with the context'. Iterative study design presupposes continuous joint collection and analysis of the data, whereby initial stages and emergent hypotheses and categories inform further fieldwork. In this process analytical framework crystallises, within which earlier hypotheses and emergent theory become refined, verified, adjusted or invalidated for that matter. Rather than following definitive concepts, the author set out to adhere to the sensitising concepts as a guide for her inquiry, whereby they were regarded as points of departure, a direction, yet not a strict code for analytic deliberation and inferences. In line with the logic of iterative research, the author's initial concepts were adjusted and refined according to the context during the data collection (Blumer, 1954). To sum up, sensitising concepts were brought to bear on the analytical framework (Seibold, 2002; Bowen, 2008), provided a sense of reference and served as a roadmap in the analysis of the data.

To illustrate the process, in course of the early literature review the author has defined SP, PD and country branding through SMEs as points of departure for this study in that these concepts provided a reference for further empirical work. Considering that the research in question did not aim at testing any hypothesis but was rather concerned with attaining a holistic understanding of the political role of SMEs in Russia, these sensitising concepts were well suited for 'seeing, organizing, and understanding experience' (Charmaz, 2003, p.259). In the course of fieldwork and as a result of the later thorough acquaintance with the literature the author refined the conceptual structure to include the issues of nation-building, national identity formation and domestic SP projection. Thus, the final analytical framework came to be as follows: 'Russian SP (external and domestic) through SMEs'. With regard to the unit of

analysis of the present study, which is the evaluation of Russian SP through SMEs, the author has identified a necessity of using two comparison groups to elucidate a holistic picture of the essence of Russian policy and its reception by the identical segment in Ukraine- one of the historically strategic target states.

5.6 Sampling Design

With the author's primary goal being an understanding of Russian SMEs' hosting strategy and its evaluation in Ukraine and ensuing interpretivist epistemology, the author resorted to purposive sampling or judgment sample (Marshall, 1996). In addition to being most commonly used in qualitative research in general, it did lend itself to the needs of this study precisely because it is suitable for 'enhancing understanding of selected individuals or groups' experience(s) or for developing theories and concepts' (Devers and Frankel, 2000, p.264). Another central and instrumentally appealing to the author feature of purposive sampling was that participants are 'selected according to predetermined criteria relevant to a particular research objective' (Guest *et al.*, 2006, p, 61).

Bearing this in mind, the author decided to follow the sequential and contingent approach (Hood, 2007), whereby informants were continuously selected on the basis of criterion of 'occupancy of structural positions relevant to the research' (Bryman, 2012, p.428). More specifically, in this case this criterion became the informants' official position in the official sports hierarchy in Russia and Ukraine as well as their knowledgeability/ involvement in politics. The initial sample was outlined as soon as the prima facie research questions were formulated for this study. The most knowledgeable/ informed population capable of providing an insight into and evaluation of Russian politics behind the SMEs seemed to be the officials at the Ministries of Sport of both countries as well as in the Russia's Olympic Committee and Ukraine's Olympic Committee. Thus, these organisations became the first level of sampling

or its context/case. As the interview questions and prompts were decided upon, the sample burgeoned to include representatives of the other strata of Russian and Ukrainian society, such as intellectuals and officials across other Russian and Ukrainian ministries (for more information on the sampling strategy and process, please see Appendix H).

With respect to the snowball recruitment of the participants, each interview was scheduled on an individual basis in the location and on time which suited the interviewee most. Conversations were audio-recorded and downloaded to the researcher's personal computer at the University of Birmingham to be later transcribed. Attending to the needs of the informant, arguably (Noy, 2008, p.334), improves 'the quality of the referring process'. Thus, in order not to get stuck at the apprehension stage but earn the participant's 'trust and sympathy' and proceed to the co-operation and participation stages (Spradley, 1979), the author followed a number of steps. For the sake of getting an interview appointment, explaining this research and formally introducing herself the author sent each potential participant an e-mail. In that way the author also addressed the remaining ethical issues of informing participants about their rights. To establish rapport during an encounter (Maxwell, 1996) the author also took some time to get to know each interviewee's biography and their current job description (Douglas, 1985, DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006).

Even though that ideally the author would have aimed to get more than 'facts and descriptions from participants', she realised that a string of circumstances would potentially stand in the way of 'engaging participants in critical discussion with a focus of challenging or transforming participants' understandings (Brinkmann cited in Roulston, 2013, p.6). Such circumstances included Russia's conceptual 'isolation' from the dominant understanding of SMEs hosting and their imaginable ensemble of 'soft' legacies as well as the author's Ukrainian nationality. As a result, the research relationships and referring process were bound

to be influenced by the structure of the political milieu. Thus, during actual interviews the author decided to avoid demonstrating her personal views and values so as to reduce the significance or minimise the intensity of potential differences (for more information on the interviews and their transcription, please see Appendix F and G).

5.7 Documents

As a means of triangulation and to ensure 'a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility' (Eisner, 1991, p.110) and diminish the effects of potential reactivity and biases (Patton, 2002) the author decided to resort to document analysis. Documents, interviews and observation are the most standard from of triangulation in qualitative research (Denzin, 1970) and accordingly the author used the first two methods in this study. Bowen (2009, p.27) speaks of document analysis as a 'systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents – both printed and electronic (computer – based and Internet- transmitted) material'. Via the researcher's interpretation of the information created without his/her intervention meaning, understanding and finally knowledge is garnered. In general, documents could include books, diaries and letters of the individuals who constitute a research sample, as well as journals, newspapers, minutes of meeting, reports, etc, relavant for a particular study. In the process of sifting through the sampled documents and synthesising the data themes and categories are produced.

While the primary method in this research was interviews, documents became 'a complementary data collection procedure in support of triangulation and theory building' (Bowen, 2009, p.35). The author's reliance on documents was dictated by indispensability of this source of data for setting the socio-cultural and political context of the research problem and providing holistic background information to the investigated phenomena (Stake, 1995). Furthermore, documents in this case could have been the most trustworthy and reliable source of information, as due to the character of the investigated issue were to become the only

source not to exhibit reactivity and obtrusiveness (Merriam, 1988). They, therefore, also helped to not only to add to the data collected through the interviews but importantly improve and correct the interview guide by offering a multi-dimensional insight to a problem (generating new questions) and pointing to the dimensions of the subsequent probing (Goldstein and Reiboldt, 2004). With regard to interviews, they also provided the background to check the interview data against. Documents, as a result, contributed to the sequential analysis (Angrosino and Mays de Perez, 2000), whereby the author went back to rethink questions and 'pursue emerging avenues of inquiry in further depth' (Pope *et al.*, 2000, p.114). Documents also set the context to the field work as they 'suggested events and situations that needed to be observed' (Bowen, 2009, p.35). The two methods used in this research, thus, augmented and cross-fertilised each other, in the end yielding consonant themes (Charmaz, 2003). Overall, in this case documents satisfied all their research 'functions', such as supplied 'background and context, additional questions to be asked, supplementary data, a means of tracking change and development, and verification of findings from other data sources' (Bowen, 2009, p. 30-31).

In the process of analysing the sampled documents the author applied elements of both content and thematic analysis. Content analysis was exhibited in the superficial preliminary document reviews, whereby the author attempted to discover passages of text pertinent to the investigated phenomena and construct provisional categories. The more thorough thematic analysis entailed intense meticulous immersion into the data in order to reveal overarching themes. Codes and categories which emerged in the process were also applied to the interview transcripts, thus further adding to the robust interactive research.

The documents the author was mostly interested in included Russian government reports and official policy documents, such as the 2014 Sochi Official Report and Strategy of the

Development of Physical Culture and Sport in Russian Federation in the period until 2020. The author also analysed all press-releases and official interviews published on the Russian Ministry of Sport and ROC web-sites, containing word combinations 'Sochi 2014' and 'Olympic Games'. Prior to searching for and analysing the documents the author needed to come up with an inclusion-exclusion criteria or which documents would be deemed appropriate to be included in the sample. The author also had to take into account a certain point in time from which to collect documents. This point was determined to be the 4th July 2007 – a date when Russia was awarded the Games by the IOC. It was chosen both due to the practical reasons of time constraints and due to the fact that Sochi 2014 was envisaged to become a major SP vehicle and, thus most of the Russian SP rhetoric and effort since the Sochi selection date had to do precisely with the Olympics. To make sure that the documents used were authentic, credible, accurate, representative the author only included the documents sourced from:

- Reputable online and news agencies such as RiaNovosti, Reuters, Tass;
- Russian state web-sites;
- and Russian Olympic Committee.

As the Sochi Games were declared by Putin to be a task of national significance and the conceptual canvas of this research includes broad understanding of the role of the Olympics and sport in socio-cultural and political processes in Russia and their effect on Russia's SP the author also resorted to the analysis of the Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly – a document which broadly sets out national values and tasks - in the period since 2000 until 2016. This time period, albeit being broader than the actual Olympic preparation and hosting process, was chosen to get a more holistic understanding of the role of sport and SMEs in Russia in the era of Putin-Medvedev diarchy. To vouch for the fit and congruence of the

documents sourced 'with the conceptual framework of the study' (Bowen, 2009, p.33) the author searched for the following word combinations within the text:

'Russia' + 'Olympic Games'

+ 'Sochi 2014'

+ 'Mega-Event'

'World Cup 2018'

+ 'Sport' + 'identity'

+ 'Sport' + 'soft power'

+ 'Sport' + 'branding'

+ Sport' + 'public diplomacy'

Therefore, the documents published by the Russian government such as the federal law 'On the Organisation and Holding of the XXII Olympic Winter Games and XI Paralympic Winter Games 2014 in Sochi City, the Development of Sochi as a Mountain Climate Resort' from 1 December 2007, Russian Federation Federal Law about Physical Culture and Sport in the Russian Federation from 16 November 2007, the 'Strategy of the Development of Physical Culture and Sport in Russian Federation in the period until 2020' from 7 August 2009 to name a few were supposed to offer an insight into Russia's objectives behind hosting SMEs, particular strategies they pursued, as well as their evaluations of such events.

As the intention of this research was not only to establish the contours of Russian identity and foreign policy interests but to trace their evolution and continuity with those of the Soviet Union, the author conducted a separate analysis of the framing of the opening and closing ceremonies of the 1980 Moscow Olympics and the 2014 Sochi Olympics in the Russian and Western media. Olympic ceremonies being a pinnacle of visibility and image projection offered a valuable opportunity not simply to see how the Soviet Union and Russia saw

themselves and wanted to be seen at the time but importantly how their identity was internalised by important Others, that is the West. The sample due to the constraints of this thesis and my language skills included publications in reputed British, US and Russian outlets, dedicated to the Moscow and Sochi ceremonies. The final sample looked as follows (Table 8):

Title of Media Outlet	**Date of Publication**
The New York Times	22 July 1980; 23 July 1980, 4 August 1980; 7 February 2014
The Observer	20 July 1980
The Telegraph	7 February 2014
The Independent	7 February 2014
The Boston Globe	7 February 2014
The Times	7 February 2014
The Guardian	21 July 1980; 28 July 1980; 4 August 1980; 5 August 1980; 6 August 1980; 13 February 2014
Huffington Post	7 February 2014
Daily Mail	8 February 2014
New Republic	8 February 2014
The Washington Post	7 February 2014; 8 February 2014
The Atlantic	7 February 2014
Chicago Tribune	4 August 1980

Title of Media Outlet	Date of Publication
Time	8 February 2014
US Today	7 February 2014
CBS News	7 February 2014
Izvestiia	20 July 1980; 4 August 1980
Pravda	20 July 1980; 4 August 1980

Table 8: List of Media Outlets used in the Analysis of the Ceremonies

As a result, the author expected to see a holistic multi-dimensional picture emerging, where the disparities between the 'ideal' outcomes the Russian elites sought to accomplish and the real one were to transpire.

5.8 Thematic Analysis

The multidimensional character of this research involved 'semi-structured in-depth interviews and document analysis, adhering to the principles of grounded theory methodology' (Bowen, 2009, p.34, Glaser and Strauss, 1965). To interpret the empirical evidence collected through documents and interviews the author decided to conduct thematic analysis. Although quite a few researchers indicate thematic analysis as a technique they used to interpret the data, they rarely elaborate on how it is different from other widely used qualitative analysis approaches, such as narrative analysis, content analysis, critical discourse analysis, etc. (Vaismorandi *et al.*, 2013; Boyatzis, 1998).

Thematic analysis is a qualitative analytic method 'for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.79). Not only does it share one common feature with all qualitative research which is searching for themes, but it also is a foundational method, whereby it provides basis skill that is applicable to other forms of qualitative research (Holloway and Todres, 2003; Boyatzis, 1998). It is not based on a great deal of codification or

clear-cut sequential steps and lends itself to grounded theory approach (Ryan and Bernard, 2000). Moreover, the fact that there are 'few of its steps and ingredients' is actually an asset of thematic analysis rather than its weakness (Bryman, 2012, p.580). Being flexible, thematic analysis still calls for clear articulation of the researcher's epistemological and ontological assumptions as well as a detailed account of the process itself (Holloway and Todres, 2003; Attride-Stirling, 2001). Essentially, this approach is recursive and iterative and requires a continuous revision of previous stages as well as a constant analysis of the data set, comparison and cross-checking of themes and patterns. Accordingly, the author analysed data as it emerged, in that she carefully went through the materials collected before proceeding to the next stage of interviews and went back and forth between the data to ensure that themes accurately represented all aspects of it.

At the start of this analysis the author needed to define what a code was and what would count as a theme. Codes are generally seen as 'the most basic segment or element of the raw data or information that may be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon' (Boyatzis, 1998, p.63). Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006, p.82) posit that a code 'captures the qualitative richness of the phenomenon'. Coding precedes identifying themes, as the latter calls for some reflection and recognition of relationships and associations between the former.

Braun and Clarke (2006) do not set out any clear boundaries to what a theme is, apart from that it has to capture something important with regard to the research questions and objectives. It could appear across the entire data corpus or a number of times in the single data item. To them repetition is the most typical, significant and instrumental indicator for establishing themes, yet insufficient as a stand-alone criterion. It is entirely up to the researcher to determine what represents a theme based on his informed judgment (Spencer *et al.*, 2003). Through thematic analysis, the author aimed to identify the most predominant and

recurring themes in her entire data set, which is a common and a viable approach when 'you are investigating an under-researched area, or you are working with participants whose views on the topic are not known' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.83). Both of these considerations were valid to this research.

In identifying the themes the author followed an inductive rather than theoretical approach, in that there were no coding frames as such and this analysis was mostly data-driven (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). That is not to say that the author lost sight of her previously articulated ontological and epistemological assumptions. But rather than strictly adhering to the boundaries of theoretical framework or research in the area, the author looked out for the vast array of themes inherent in the data (Vaismoradi *et al.*, 2013; Sandelowski, 2010). This effectively meant that having set out with an overarching theme of 'nation building' the author established that in order to capture the whole depth of that process in Russia it warranted separation into the following sub-themes: 'national consolidation', 'national mobilisation', patriotism stimulation/connecting epochs', 'regime legitimisation', 'construction of a New Russian Person'. As a result, such a data-driven approach to recognising themes produced some unexpected findings. The emergence of a New Russian Person type is but one example.

In terms of discovering the themes in the data in practice, the author adhered to the following tactics. First, while fully engaged with the text the author looked for repeating topics or common threads throughout the data. The author also paid attention to the use of metaphors and analogies in interviews and in documents. Moreover, the author tried to observe the differences across interviewees in approaching the topics raised as well as looked for intrinsic causal links in the speech by taking notice of the use of words 'because' or 'since'. And most importantly, in view of the nature of this research, the author kept an eye out for what was

intentionally not said which topics were preferred to be omitted by participants as well as their emotions in general. Finally, the author focused on relating the themes which she discovered to concepts from the theoretical framework (Ryan and Bernard, 2003).

With regard to the level of thematic analysis, in accordance with her constructivist and interpretivist affiliations the author operated within the latent tradition (Boyatzis, 1998). This way the author attempted not just to skim the surface meaning of the data, but 'identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations-ideologies – that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.84). This attention to the context where the meaning is created is in fact one of the notable assets of thematic analysis (Loffe and Yardley, 2004; Downe-Wamboldt, 1992).

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented an exhaustive analysis of the author's methodology, possible limitations of this research and what arrangements were made for this research to stand the test of rigor. This chapter also provided a detailed overview of the social constructivist orientation of this research, which places SMEs hosting into the perspective of IR.

CHAPTER 6: 'WAR AND PEACE' AT THE 1980 MOSCOW AND 2014 SOCHI OLYMPICS: THE ROLE OF HARD AND SOFT POWER IN RUSSIAN IDENTITY

6.1 Introduction

Not many states host the summer and winter Olympics and the FIFA WC, effectively the Crown Jewels of the SME world. Such 'first-order' events (Black, 2008) are the biggest and most prestigious sporting events favoured by states for their potential to increase international prestige and SP (Nye, 1990). In general – and in the extant SME literature – the acquisition of SP is among the chief reasons why a state invests so heavily in a one-off, expensive, logistically complex sporting event (Giulianotti, 2015; Abel, 2012; Mangan, 2010; Finlay and Xin, 2010; Grix, 2016). In what follows, this chapter traces the USSR and Russian state's use of SMEs and seeks to show through both historical and contemporary examples that Russia is an 'outlier' among key SME hosts. Further, it shows that the pursuit of domestic SP goals, including going to war shortly before or during the event, actually resulted in a loss of international prestige and SP. Thus, the main argument put forward is that there would appear to be a case of path dependency involved in Russia's relationship with SMEs and a failure to derive maximum SP benefits from such events.

6.2 Historical Context

In 1980 the USSR was preparing to host its first and only summer Olympic Games – an event of strategic political importance for the state leadership and a celebration of unparalleled openness and freedom in the as yet closed society. As the last pre-Olympic year drew to a close and the whole country was in anticipation of the upcoming festivities, the Politburo made a decision to send troops to Afghanistan; thus, in 1979, the USSR was dragged into its final and fatal war. As a result, the Soviets' greatest SP opportunity was eclipsed by 'a

watershed event, delegitimising Soviet policy, and Communism more generally, in the eyes of world public opinion' (Gibbs, 2009, p.239).

In the 1980s the speculations abounded as to the actual reasons behind the USSR's invasion. These ranged from the most obvious, such as the defence of the south-eastern border (security), support of the local communist government, messianism or sense of entitlement (ideology of Marxism, internationalist duty), to challenging the US dominance in the Persian Gulf and East Asia (neo-imperialism, expansionism) (Carter, 1980; Hilali, 2003; Hughes, 2008), and teaching a 'hard-power' lesson to unruly Eastern European satellite states by showing its strength in Afghanistan (Kanin, 1980).

The 1980 Moscow Olympics and invasion of Afghanistan, as well as the 2014 Sochi Olympics and Russian interference in Ukraine, are the USSR's and Russia's attempts to 'assert itself as a global superpower' while military campaigns are widely considered to fall within 'historic Russian policy of empire' (Grinter, 1982, p.55). There is also an opinion that the Soviet invasion in 1979 was a pre-emptive measure with regard to the growing influence of the USA in Afghanistan, and accordingly was undertaken out of grounded security concerns rather than neo-imperialistic ambitions (Hughes, 2008; Savranskaya, 2001). Taking into account the fact that first the USSR and Russia recently substantially discredited its Olympic effort and neutralised attendant SP gains, Urnov's following judgment appears partially just:

> In the absence of serious hard and soft capabilities, the splashes of aggressiveness in Russian foreign policy and of anti-Western sentiments in domestic political life are unlikely to have any lasting effect. They are able, however, to generate extremely negative long-term consequences for the country (2014, p.305).

One of the motives for the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan and subsequent refusal to accept the US ultimatum to withdraw its troops lest its Olympics were boycotted may be the role of

honour in Russia's self-concept. Since the end of the Cold War social constructivist stream of IR has been most rigorous furthering the cause-and-effect hypothesis between Russia's identity and its foreign policy and status (Neumann, 1996; 1999; Larson and Shevchenko, 2010; Hopf, 2013; Clunan, 2014). According to Urnov (2014, p.306), in Russia's case ''Status'' denotes the position of a country on an international 'honour/prestige' scale [……] which nowadays - taking into consideration the growing importance and popularity of the concept of soft power - would rather be called 'power- and influence-oriented prestige'. While both status and honour are central to Russia's identity vividly more than for others (Tsygankov, 2012; Hillison, 2017), status is external, dependent on recognition by important others and rests on 'wealth, coercive capabilities, culture, demographic position, socio-political organisation, and diplomatic clout' (Welch *et al.*, 2014, p.7). Honour, on the other hand, may be defined as 'following a code of conduct associated with a status group' and as such requires neither formal recognition nor is it conferred by important others (ibid). It is the internalised 'universal need for self-esteem' and in Russia's case is derived/upheld by sticking to its self-determined international commitments (Lebow, 2007, p.168). In this respect, Kalinosvsky's observation about the context of Russian foreign policy in the late 20th century may be instrumental in understanding the primary reasons for invasion:

> By the 1990s, Soviet foreign policymakers operated within a political order in which the USSR was the patron of a vast network of client states and Moscow's support to Third World States and guerrilla movements was almost as much a part of the Soviet Union's self-identity (at least in terms of foreign policy) as a victory in Great Patriotic War (2009, p.70).

Although not defined as significant in traditional analyses of Moscow's behaviour in Afghanistan, honour is seen by Tsygankov (2009) as a cornerstone of Russia's geostrategic culture and as a driving force in its relations with the outside world and the West in particular. It is precisely out of considerations of honour that Russia has been dragged into bloodletting

and often futile conflicts and dismissed withdrawal for fear of losing face. In this regard, the Afghan war invites comparison with WWI, another conflict of the 20th century which precipitated the collapse of the empire, exposing the weaknesses of the state and funnelling revolutionary undercurrents to the surface.

Although in the first case it was Christianity that guided Russia's actions and atheistic Marxist-Leninist values in the second, one aspect – honour – is apparent in both instances. Remarkably, it was the pursuit of honour by hard methods with no observable hard gains to it, which brought Russia disgrace and humiliation at least on these two occasions. On the other hand, Russia seems to wage honour-driven wars when it feels not only strong enough militarily, which was the case both in WWI and Afghanistan (and in its recent involvement in Ukraine), but also when it is genuinely proud of its extant values and self-righteously believes that they deserve proliferation/ protection (Wohlforth, 1998; Welch *et al.*, 2014) – this is the essence of Russia's particular take on SP.

Although continually reappearing as a guiding rationale in Russian foreign policy, honour does not seem to benefit the nation (Tsygankov, 2014). Russian foreign policy, every so often punctuated by honour motivations, does not seem to bear fruit. While WWI conditioned the fall of Tsarist Empire and muddied the sense of national purpose, the Afghan war dispelled the illusion of domestic SP and akin to WWI had a profound effect on Russians' self-image and what they made of their status in the world (Kamrany and Killian, 1992), or as Hilali put it 'left a deep dent and devastating impact in the Soviet psyche' (Hilali, 1999; p.118). Hence, there remains a tangible uneasiness with the psychological legacy of these wars and difficulty to accommodate them into national historical memory annals. Unlike epic WWII, these were just 'episodes' on Russia's historical path which do not fit well into a glorious narrative of a great power.

Therefore, if the Soviet Union intended to raise its international status through hosting the 1980 Olympics, then gaining the upper hand in Afghanistan was a matter of preserving its honour and the status quo. The Soviet understanding of the status quo, in turn, has been summed up by Nikita Khrushchev in 1961 as expansionism (Hilali, 2003). With an eye on its prestige and seeing IR as a 'zero-sum' game, as many 'realist' IR academics do, the Kremlin also feared that an Afghan precedent could have demonstrative effects and cause unrest in the socialist camp (Grau, 2004; Gibbs, 2006; Hughes, 2008). As a result, while both the Olympic Games and Afghanistan were aspects of Soviet government policy (Carter, 1980) and important for Russian self-image and identity, the traditional considerations of honour, albeit in the end lethal for the state, prevailed. Considering that both hard and soft power are equally important nowadays for ensuring international recognition, it appears that the Soviet leadership intuitively longed for a balance between soft and hard power capabilities. The USSR soft power proposition in Afghanistan, and it was very much the same for the other converted socialist states, included heavy technical and capital assistance as well as wide-ranging infrastructural, educational and cultural programmes (Grau, 2004). Instead of facilitating growth such 'gestures of friendship' often resulted in 'penetration, manipulation, control and eventually exploitation for multiple purposes' of the client (Hilali, 2003; p.133).

The paradox then is that what the USSR saw as the preservation of its SP was essentially a deployment of HP (hard power). It could be, therefore, that one of the reasons for the USSR's collapse was a misperception of the two concepts by the elites and thus an urge to maintain its SP at all costs in the third world (economic aid) and preserve a SP illusion in Eastern Europe (military measures).

This thesis posits that the USSR ultimately failed because, by the 1990s, it had discredited all its SP resources. The Soviets never managed to 're-establish their anti-imperialist credentials

with the non-aligned states' in the Third World (Hughes, 2008, p.331). Moreover, for the USSR to exist Moscow had to maintain international influence and domestic SP. While the very survival of the USSR, unlike the US or China for example, which are nation-states, was based on the sufficient exercise of SP by its centre, the dismal state of affairs in 1991 in Moscow could not preclude an imminent collapse. As Dibb put it:

> There is no doubt that the USSR's defeat in Afghanistan hastened its demise and exposed Moscow's corrupt ideology. The Soviet war in Afghanistan in effect marked the end of empire. And it contributed to a decline of communist ideology and geopolitical conviction in Moscow (2010, p.505).

By late 1986, the Afghanistan war had significantly impacted on Soviet domestic politics (Hilali, 2003). Anti-militarism became strong in non-Russian Soviet republics and 'took on a nationalistic character' in Moldavia, Central Asia, the Transcaucasus, and the Baltic region (Hilali, 1999, p.116). In fact, for non-Russians the war turned into a unifying symbol of their opposition to Moscow's rule (Reuveny and Prakash, 1999, p.698). This was a moment when the distinct anti-Russian identity started to take root in many Soviet republics, falling on the particularly fertile ground, as we can see now, in Ukraine, Georgia and previously in Chechnya (Kamrany and Killian, 1992). Susceptible to a sort of psychological omission, the Afghan war, nevertheless, deserves particular attention, since the processes triggered by it still have reverberations today, ironically precluding the spread and influence of Russian SP in the Commonwealth of Independent States, which Russia sees as its sphere of privileged interests (Medvedev, 2008; Foreign Policy Concept, 2013).

To sum up, the Afghan campaign made a substantial contribution to the moral decline of the army, degradation of the society where military was once an object of pride (Kamrany and Killian, 1992; Grau and Nawroz 1995; Hughes, 2008), corruption of the founding principles and, subsequently, became a bleeding wound for the whole Soviet state (Kamrany and

Killian, 1992; Hilali, 1999; Reuveny and Prakash, 1999). Soviet intervention and ensuing failures to establish peace were unanimously condemned in the West and effectively put an end to détente. Further, it undermined Soviet prestige and endangered the forthcoming Olympic Games in Moscow. In fact, as official records testify, the intervention was the last resort, 'taken reluctantly and in desperation, and not as part of a wider strategic challenge' (Hilali, 2003, p. 122; see also Hughes, 2008). What is missing, however, from the academic analysis of this affair is that first and foremost the USSR had to deploy hard power when its SP suffered an inglorious defeat, albeit an SP supported by 'carrots' in the form of $1.265 billion economic and $1.250 billion of technical aid (Hilali, 2005, p.698).

Despite all the setbacks and failures for which the Kremlin is accountable, the USSR military effort was substantially offset by the USA that 'provided a total of $2.15 billion worth of assistance to mujahidin groups between 1979 and 1988, and this assistance was matched by the Saudi monarchy' (Hughes, 2008, p.335). This strategy, in turn, stemmed from 'a vengeful desire to make the Soviets suffer their own Vietnam' (ibid; see also Gibbs, 2006 and Brzezinsky, 1998b).

Moscow's involvement in Afghanistan and in the Ukraine, substantially damaged Russia's international image. Both military actions were inextricably and paradoxically linked to an event which was envisaged to do quite the opposite - elevate Russia's prestige to new heights. It seems, therefore, that when Russia was involved, the West viewed SMEs as a far more nuanced political battleground than previously thought (Killanin, 1983; Khinkulova, 2015), and that long before such events assumed their modern status as 'a tool for political gain' (Moretti, 2013, p.13).

6.3 Political Controversy and Legacies of the 1980 Moscow Olympics

Despite the pressures from the US and Jimmy Carter's personal involvement in the issue, Lord Killanin, president of the IOC at the time, however, was quite adamant to see the XXII Olympic Games take place in the Soviet Union (Vinocur, *The New York Times*, April 23, 1980, p.3; Gwertzman, *The New York Times*, January 22, 1980, p.A1). His position was strengthened by the unanimous vote of the other seventy three members of the IOC to the same effect (Rodda, *The Guardian*, February 13, 1980, p.1; Amdur, *The New York Times*, February 13, p.A1), who agreed that the Olympics 'must be held in Moscow as planned' (Lorge, *The Washington Post*, February 12, 1980, p.1). Apart from the technical difficulties related with relocating the Games elsewhere (Amdur, *The New York Times*, February 7, 1980, p.B7), the IOC's decision was partially conditioned by the prospect of a multi-million dollar legal suit by the Soviets because 'all preparations have been made in keeping with the terms of [the agreement signed between Moscow and the IOC] and consistent with the rules of the IOC' ('Statement by Lord Killanin on the Moscow Games', *The New York Times*, February 13, 1980, p.13). Moreover, so principled was Killanin's stand to prevent the Olympic movement from being used a tool for political gain that he was prepared to see the Olympics proceed with 'only Eastern European countries and a few others competing' (Rodda, *The Guardian*, February 13, 1980, p.5), or 'even if [he was] there alone competing' (Killanin quoted by Weisman, *The New York Times*, May 17, 1980, p.6). It must be noted here that notwithstanding the unambiguous political and media discourse in the West as regards the boycott lest the Soviets withdraw their troops or the relocation of the Games elsewhere, the situation was far more nuanced. The decision Killanin faced, therefore, was at the very least twofold. On the one hand, as pointed out by the U.S secretary of State Cyrus R.Vance in his address to the IOC, the Kremlin saw the Olympics as a 'recognition of ''the correctness of its foreign political course'' and its ''enormous services … in the struggle for peace'' (Vance

quoted by Lorge, *The Washington Post*, February 10, 1980, p.1). Or as Anthony Lewis for *The New York Times* (February 11, 1980, p.27) observed in a similar spirit the Games would have been seen as 'a symbol of legitimacy: the sign that the world has accepted the Soviet system'. In view of that, Killanin, as if to counter any inferences to the contrary, which abounded nonetheless, on every occasion indicated that Moscow was chosen as Olympic host purely 'for the contribution the Soviet Union made to international sport and not for any political purposes' (Killanin to press: ''Stick to sport'', *The Guardian*, July 10, 1980, p.22), and that when Moscow was chosen as an Olympic site in 1974 'the decision was ''welcomed as a symbol of mutual understanding'' (Killanin quoted by Lorge, *The Washington Post*, February 10, 1980, p.1). Moreover, not only did Lord Killanin incessantly talk about making every effort to prevent the Soviets from leveraging the Games as a propaganda weapon (Apple Jr., *The New York Times*, January 26, 1980, p.4), but he also took it up with Brezhnev that the official Soviet booklet indeed implied that 'the Olympics were being held in Moscow in recognition of Soviet foreign policy' (Killanin quoted by Joyce, *The Guardian*, May 30, 1980, p.24). On the other hand, there was a fair degree of hypocrisy in the Western governments' calls for a boycott considering that they did not impose any diplomatic sanctions on Moscow and trade relations for the most part continued as usual (ibid; Downie Jr., *The Washington Post*, January 21, 1980, p.2).

Furthermore, in the midst of the boycott threats prompted by what was endorsed as the Kremlin's undemocratic behaviour, Killanin importantly raised a question about the legitimacy of the Western governments' actions (Apple Jr., *The New York Times*, January 26, 1980, p.4), which not only 'have stated that the athletes of their countries might not be encouraged [to go to Moscow]' but went as far as to indicate that '[their athletes] might be forbidden to take part in the Games' (Rodda, *The Guardian*, February 13, 1980, p.5). Indeed,

considering that technically the British government (pressurized for outlined political response itself so as the USA were not left 'alone in its firmness') (Hurd, the Foreign Minister of State, quoted in 'The Government considers calling for Olympic boycott', *The Guardian*, Janurary 15, 1980, p.21; see also Lewis, *The New York Times*, May 14, 1980, p.5), for example, 'could only offer advice, and there [was] no certainty that a recommendation to withdraw would be carried out' ('Olympic boycott plea to Thatcher', *The Guardian*, January 3, 1980, p.22), Hector Monroe, the Sports Minister of Britain, was far too vocal stating that 'while the Government was not considering compulsion it felt strongly that the athletes should not go to Moscow' (quoted by Chorlton, *The Guardian*, February 28, 1980, p.3). To get a point across Thatcher, in her turn, in a letter to the British Olympic Association (BOA) in the most emphatic manner indicated that participation in the Moscow Olympics would equal to 'condon[ing] an international crime' (Langdon, *The Guardian*, February 20, 1980, p.28). All these strong appeals to the National Olympic Committees (NOCs) to show political cohesion on the issue seem hardly democratic considering the alleged separation of the NOCs from the government structures. In fact, as suggested by the IOC's decision on the influence of the politicians on the BOA, the latter '[could] only decline their suggestions, otherwise they would be in breach of Olympic rules, relating to political interference' (Rodda, *The Guardian*, March 3, 1980, p.19).

Given the circumstances, however, the resolve of Sir Dennis Follows, the chairmen of the BOA, to 'resist as strong as we could any attempts of the governments to interfere', appears all the more remarkable ('Olympic boycott plea to Thatcher', *The Guardian*, January 3, 1980, p.22). As the opening of the Olympics drew closer, the parlance of the public discussion became even more heated with James Kilfider, MP for the North Down, for example, urging the politicians to 'keep their hands off from the Olympics, bearing in mind that if political

criteria are to be adopted as the test of suitability of host nations, the Games would never have taken place at all' (quoted in 'Olympics: ''No firm view yet'', *The Guardian*, January 17, 1980, p.20).

In view of the above it has to be noted, that the actual reasons for the USA initially contemplating a boycott had little to do with the Afghan predicament. President Carter's administration itself came under considerable pressure from the Jewish Defence League that ostensibly took up the cause of the dissidents in the USSR (who predominantly were Jewish) (Brasher, *The Observer*, August 20, 1978, p.15). Long before the Afghan invasion the Moscow Games were framed as 'the Olympics [which] are to be held in the capital city of a totalitarian state which is reportedly already drawing up plans to "neutralise" Jewish and other dissidents for the period of the Games' ('Wong Tour, Wrong Time', *The Guardian*, December 20, 1979, p.10). Much publicised human rights concerns led *The Guardian* reporter to emphasise an obvious likeness between the Moscow Games and the infamous 1936 Nazi Games. To him, the fact that the Soviets 'feted the sporting representatives of the authoritarian regimes, Black and White' presaged an 'equally distasteful' show (ibid). In direct contradiction with his colleague and quite in tune with the previously quoted James Kilfider, Brasher of *The Observer* (August 20, 1978, p.15) speaking of the boycott as leverage against the political persecution of dissidents in Russia prior to the Afghan invasion opined:

> it seems to me that this pressure is based on ignorance of what the Olympic movement stands for: equality of opportunity to compete regardless of race, creed or color. All that the Olympic movement can do is to reiterate its principles and stand by them in all the activities it controls. But it is lost if it tries to interfere in the internal affairs of any nation, however much individual members of the International Olympic Committee might abhor what is going on in Russia or Chile or wherever.

Indeed, Afghanistan invasion notwithstanding, the 1980 Moscow Olympics would still have become mired in political controversy due to a number of issues. There was a question of the two Chinas, Israel's and West Berlin's participation, which would have put Moscow into a

politically explosive situation. With the unresolved issue between mainland China and Taiwan over who would take part at the Olympics and Taipei's unwillingness to compromise, it seemed, that the People's Republic of China would be the one to go to Moscow. Moreover, the USSR's suspension of diplomatic relationship with Israel, and the equation of Zionism with racism in addition to Arab pressure on Moscow and a strong Jewish opposition domestically - all of these factors made Israel's participation problematic. These issues, however, resolved themselves without an official stance from Moscow, when both Israel and China, succumbing to the US led initiative, entered the ranks of the boycotters (Jefferys, 2012).

The functions assigned to the Moscow Olympics by the leadership were twofold - to become a major showcase for the country – 'crown the Brezhnev years with glory; [and to] bring that worldwide endorsement of Soviet foreign policy' (*The Times*, July 19, 1980), while rallying domestic support and reinforcing the elites' positions. It is the 'domestic' aims, if not peculiar to Russia, then definitely possessing a Russian twist, that deserve particular attention (Grix and Kramareva, 2015).

In terms of international functions of the Moscow Olympics, they were in tune with the SP goals of the modern-day SMEs and were well summarised by Willis (*The Christian Science Monitor*, January 22, 1980):

> …for the Kremlin, the Olympic Games in July are a vital political event. The Soviet leaders think success will shower their country with world legitimacy and approval, advertise the achievements of Lenin's revolution over the past 63 years, and 'prove' the Soviet desire for peace.

With the chances of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan dwindling as the Olympics drew closer, it seems that Washington was intent to 'reduce the size of the international stage on which [the USSR] hoped to show off the value of its political and social system' (Moretti,

2013, p.15) and instead 'turn the Moscow event into a meaningless hypocritical spectacle' (Mondale cited in *Reuter and Associated Press*, 1980). The boycott threats also purposefully targeted the domestic credibility of the Soviet leadership (Carter, 1980). The Politburo, however, weighing up what was at stake for the US and its allies, felt that the Games would go ahead as planned, inasmuch as the politics would not affect them the way they did in the end. The situation around the Olympics in the final months was as follows:

> …to slam the Soviet authorities into the penalty box, they [international observers] argue would make a strong impact on a most sensitive area: the government's political desire to be seen (especially by its own citizens) playing gracious host to dozens of approving nations. So far, however, the Soviets do not regard the boycott threat as serious, according to dispatches from Moscow (Rushworth, *Christian Science Monitor*, January 18, 1980).

The overall scepticism about the wide-scale concerted boycott was also prevalent in the West (Klose, *Los Angeles Times*, January 16, 1980; Moretti, 2013). The roots of the USSR's disbelief and their leadership priorities are summed up thus:

> It is doubtful the Soviets thought President Carter would indeed boycott the Olympics, and if he did, Afghanistan simply was more important than the Games. They probably knew that they could count on the IOC to hold the Moscow award, and on the West to react to Afghanistan the way it reacted to Czechoslovakia by calling for major arms control and détente (Kanin, 1980, p.6).

Considering the boycott unlikely, the USSR was still prepared for the worst-case scenario. On the other hand, we can see that the Olympic Games, although firmly established as a key vehicle of diplomacy and political leverage, were not yet regarded as an all-or-nothing affair.

Consequently, the 1980 Olympic Games became a victim of false expectations, with neither side being realistic about the tenacity of its counterpart's position and as a result not willing to compromise. The immediate prospects of the boycotted Olympics as well as wider political legacies were described by Kanin (1980, p.6):

> Without the US in Moscow, the Games would turn into a large-scale Spartakiade, or a simple Soviet-East-German meet. The Soviet populace might draw together in a patriotic reaction, but would also be aware of how seriously Afghanistan affected East-West relations. Any large-scale international support for the US move would add to the embarrassment and reduce the political legitimacy the Soviets hoped to gain from hosting the Olympic spectacle.

It is obvious that without US participation and with the other countries following suit, the 1980 Moscow Olympics were relegated to the second rank of sports events (Moretti, 2013). Yet this is only true where the sports/competitiveness component is concerned. Given the political fracas with the Games becoming a pinnacle of the US-USSR confrontation so far and other repercussions looming (rhetorical heat boiling into actual militant conflict), the Games lived up to be a true mega-event with all the qualities pertaining to it nowadays (Carter, 1980).

Thus, under the realities of the Cold War, hard power concerns came well before the prospects of SP gains. The tables have turned since, however, with no country willing to risk the Olympic effort. The 1980 Moscow Olympics and Afghanistan invasion, indeed, invite comparisons with the 2014 Sochi Olympics and conflict in Ukraine in terms of their timing, implications for national psyche and nation-building. Despite apparent similarities, the two cases differ in some substantial points: while the USSR's intervention in Afghanistan encountered outright international opposition, resulting in 65 countries boycotting the Games (Scanlon, 2015), it was also not approved by the Soviet citizens. The annexation of Crimea and the Russian role in the Ukrainian conflict, on the other hand, found countrywide support, due to strong historical-cultural associations and the perceived strategic importance of Ukraine. (Although Afghanistan was viewed as a necessary political step, unlike Ukraine it did not feature as strongly in the sphere of Russian interest and did not constitute a part of the nation's self-concept and national identity). Both Olympics spurred a patriotic sentiment among the domestic population. The Sochi case, however, is noteworthy since it provides an

example of all-embracing military and sports patriotism intertwined. The Russian leadership also seemed to turn the stalemate to its advantage at least in the short term. The West-written script for the Ukraine brought hard-power gains for Russia, albeit at the cost of its SP designs. Thus, as in 1980 Russia once again proved that hard power concerns remain far more resilient than SP illusions.

In terms of sanctions, it is not the first time the USA used its leverage against Russia in close time proximity to the Olympics. In 1980, the year of the Moscow Olympics, to make a political point about the invasion of Afghanistan, the US introduced a series of economic and cultural sanctions (Dibb, 2010; Moretti, 2013). They included the embargo on grain deliveries, cuts on high-technology industrial equipment sales, postponement of strategic-arms-limitation treaty (SALTII) ratifications, as well as restrictions on scientific and cultural exchanges (Carter, 1980; Hughes, 2008). These measures, however, according to studies published by the US News and World Report (16.06.1980) appeared to have a profound negative effect on the US stakeholders while little influence on Russian behaviour. Thus, US grain exports were reduced from an expected $4.8 billion to $1.5 billion with Washington having to resort to approximately $3 billion government purchases to compensate the farmers (Paarlberg, 1980; Tarrant, 1981; Brandsma and Hallet, 1984). Russia was quick to find alternative suppliers such as Argentina and Brazil. It also found producers of high-tech equipment in Western Europe and Japan, with the US subsequently losing two-thirds of an expected $150 million (Tarrant, 1981).

Taking into account Russia's stance on Afghanistan, the experts were inclined to conclude that Carter's actions, with most of the Western European allies refusing to follow suit, with the likes of France 'unwilling to sacrifice both continental détente and their commercial links with the USSR and Eastern Europe' (Hughes, 2008, p.334), had rather more negative short-

term repercussions for the US than the USSR, failing to force Russia to cease its campaign in Afghanistan (Christie, 1986; Sarantakes, 2011; Jefferys, 2012).

6.4 War and Sport – Sochi as a Recipe for Russia's 'Greatness'

Apart from a viable national idea, territorial integrity is among the prerequisites of Putin's Russia (Putin, 2011; Blank, 2012); accordingly the second Chechen war and the Sochi Olympics must be scrutinised as two formative episodes in Russian ascendancy to self-proclaimed great power status. The Chechen crisis has been traditionally endorsed as Putin's critical victory in prevention of the state's breakdown, a symbolic moment when Russia finally started to struggle to its feet (Koltsova, 2000; Gayoso, 2009). It is the second Chechen war where the narrative of Putin-the strong statesman – originated (Herspring, 2007). The Sochi Olympics, on the other hand, from the outset were interwoven into the storyline of modern Russia, and arguably envisaged to become a birthplace of a new Russian heroic national idea, whatever concrete characteristics it might take.

While Russia's involvement in Chechnya was a culmination of all the grudges simmering within the state such as –'the threat of disintegration, the perceived penetration and subversion by foreign forces, the weakening of state structures as a result of criminality and terror, and Russia's basic inability to stand up for itself and secure its core national objectives' (Dannreuther and March, 2008, p.99) – and could be viewed as an example of defensive politics, the Sochi Olympics, taking place in a different geopolitical environment and with Russia possessing a different set of capabilities, should be assessed as a distinctive assertive geopolitical act.

Chechnya also activated a vulnerable 'besieged fortress' mentality or a tendency to attribute all domestic miseries to the intrigues and scheming of foreign enemies (Koltsova, 2000; Remington, 2009; Vazquez, 2014). Hence stems a heightened suspicion and pro-active (or

expansionist as the cases of South Ossetia and Crimea have demonstrated) foreign policy towards Western-leaning ex-Soviet republics, such as Ukraine and Georgia (Dannreuther and March, 2008; Gayoso, 2009; Etkind, 2011).

Ironically, secessionist sentiment in Chechnya (Savranskaya, 2001) and strengthening of self-identification as a separate ethnic entity in Ukraine (Reuveny and Prakash, 1999) were brought to pass by the ignominious performance of the Soviet army in Afghanistan, disillusionment in the all-mighty nature of the state and, as a result, the Politburo loosing grip on the control levers in society.

Although Chechnya and Ukraine differ across structural characteristics (one is the federal state of Russia, the other – a sovereign state), Russian actions appear motivated by a similar logic. The republics' pursuit of independence - political, economic or cultural - apart from posing a serious threat for Russian concrete geostrategic interests (Chechnya is rich in oil (Gayoso, 2009) and the Ukraine, according to Brzezinski (1998a), is the only remaining vestige of Russian European identification), gave a painful psychological to the weakened Russia(Etkind, 2011; Blank, 2012). Feeling mistreated, fooled, its prestige and status encroached upon and threatened by such audacious decolonisation impulses (physical and cultural) (Hughes, 2001), Russia found strength in its miseries and took an assertive stance (Ispa-Landa, 2003).

However, if in Chechnya the liberation movement was successfully done away with and a 'Chechenisation' campaign is in full swing (Calzini, 2005; Dannreuter and March, 2008), then in Ukraine as very mildly put by Sakwa (2015, p.556) 'the predominant model of Ukrainian nation-building predicated on separation from Moscow' is in motion. In fact, there is a relentless political institutialisation of an anti-Russian identity taking place (Khrebtan-

Hörhager, 2016). The law 'on Holodomor' by the Ukrainian parliament, Verkhovna Rada, in 2006, the glorification of Stepan Bandera, a Ukrainian political activist, and the provision of an equal status to the OUN/UPA soldiers and the Red Army WWII veterans are but a few examples of the Ukrainian leadership's self-serving short-sightedness and lack of cultural acumen, which, arguably, not only contribute towards political animosity between two countries, but are undeniably at the roots of the civil conflict in Ukraine (Matveeva, 2016).

Chechnya (second operation) was the first moment since the fall of the USSR, which united Russian publics in a patriotic mood. According to Hughes (2001, p.14), 'the conflict in Chechnya could be understood as a shift from imperial disengagement to the rediscovery of imperial nerve in Russia, first under Yeltsin, and then Putin'.

This observation is highly valuable as it establishes precisely the roots and timing of the re-emergence of Russian great-power ambitions. Hence stems the character of Russian internal nation-building process, revival of geopolitics, expediency of power centralisation and outlines of national ideology to be harnessed (Pfaff, 2000). Instrumental for understanding a connection between the legacy of the Chechen crisis and a 'new' assertive Russia is Calzini's (2005; p, 26) following comment:

> It is symptomatic that after the Beslan tragedy, Putin expressed nostalgia for the Soviet past, when Russia was seen, in his words, as 'an impressive state and a great power'. Reference to the strong state returned with a new rhetorical emphasis demanded by the deliberately dramatised atmosphere in an appeal to the values of militant patriotism. The need for military opposition to what was presented as a threat to the survival of the Russian nation was used to justify a decisive step in the process of consolidating state structures.

While Afghanistan put an end to the ideology of a crumbling empire, Chechnya is seen as a trigger for an ideology of a rising empire.

Pursuit of neo-imperialist policies in the post-Soviet space and the North Caucasus as well as consistency of foreign policy objectives may be put down to the values passed down to the elites or a sign of Russian general political culture (Kennan, 1947; Gaddis, 1997, Cox, 2003), which most Western pundits see as 'inherently aggressive, expansionist and imperialist, but … also persistent and irreversible' (Gayoso, 2009; p.237; see also Etkind, 2011; Blank, 2012). Such arguments are in line with a rationalist view of IR, where interests and identity are regarded as given and neither flexible, nor susceptible to change due to social interaction/participation in the international system. Yet they might also be explained by what Pipes (1996) and Pierson (2004) refer to as a path dependency, whereby the strategic decisions of the present only repeat the successful ones of the past. These propositions, on the other hand, fall within the social constructivist interpretation of appropriation of the historical identities and definition of national interest (Clunan, 2014, p.282):

> At the core of the argument is that the past national "self" forms a historical reference point in elite evaluations of current competing national self-images. Elite collective memories of the high and low points of the country's past create aspirations to replicate the best and avoid the worst in that history. These historical aspirations provide a benchmark of historical validity against which current national self-images are evaluated.

War has repeatedly proved a fail-safe political currency for Putin whenever he felt his legitimacy questioned or approval rates drop below acceptable (Koltsova, 2000; Vazquez, 2014). During the second Chechen war, which gave him political visibility, official media created an 'image of a man of order, a statesman with no qualms' (Dennreuther and March, 2008, p.102; Remington, 2009). Playing an 'integrity' and 'security' card, emphasising the imminent danger of country's disintegration lest he was elected president, Putin thus rallied humiliated, poverty-stricken population behind the flag for the first time (Ispa-Landa, 2003; Mendras, 2012). Putin's political persona and the official role played in Russian politics evolved over time, contingent in immediate circumstances and strategic needs and essentially

borrowing from the reservoir of tried-and-tested Russian political myths (Hutcheson and Petersson, 2016). From the saviour of the nation from extremism, Islamism and disintegration in the wake of his presidency to a balanced pragmatic economic reformer during his first tenure (Calzini, 2005; Russell, 2005; Remington, 2009), to a father of the nation, - Putin's public image has been consistent in one crucial respect. Putin's political credibility early on as a presidential candidate in 1999 (Vazquez, 2009; Pfaff, 2000) and legitimacy quite recently has been closely interlinked with his ability to deliver- both in resolution of the armed conflicts and in putting on an SME. Both instances are emblematic of his rule - they are both symbolic extravagant political shows with a very high price tag attached- both financial and human.

However disparate the causes and rationale for war and an SME might be - with the former being a manifestation of realpolitik (Hughes, 2001; Blank, 2012) whereas the latter allegedly aiming at an SP boost - both events, nevertheless, were instrumental in the construction and legitimisation of Putin's political persona (Russell, 2005; Kolossov and Toal, 2007). They also offer a pool for militant and sports patriotism, which by government's sleight of hand, became defining for nation-building in Russia nowadays (Sherlock, 2007; Wood, 2011). In 1996 Sestanovich assumed that under conditions of social and political uncertainty ordinary Russians find consolation in 'geotherapy'. Following factors condition such a psychological escapism:

> ….that Russians support an expansionist policy to which leaders must respond, that the Russian elite retains an imperial mindset, that Russian leaders are preoccupied with issues of (lost) prestige and status (quoted in O'loughlin, 2001, p.21).

Therefore, the second Chechen war (and quite recently the Crimean affair) and the Sochi Olympics, living up to these expectations and predictably driving up the approval rates of the president (Russell, 2005; Ray, 2014; Saeed, 2015), could be understood as initial triggers for

the post-modern Russian ideology. In fact, direct association of the figure of Putin with the Sochi Olympics, his high visibility during the opening ceremony, as well as perhaps most importantly his continuous proposals to make sport part of the national idea and cultivation of his athletic image, have become the most identifiable characteristic of the nascent official national ideology. The tendency bears resemblance to the state of affairs in the Soviet sport as described by Grant (2010, p.727):

> The impression produced is that the development and success of Soviet physical culture and sport owed entirely to the efforts of the 'great Lenin'. Symptomatic of the Lenin cult and its imputations, Soviet sport and physical culture had come to be considered as indispensable element of Marxist-Leninist doctrine.

Building a logical causation between Putin's persona and his identification with Russia and its remerging greatness and national identity, Foxall (2013), likewise, argues that we could trace the evolution of it by a closer look at Putin's presidency. Throughout his tenures he played varying geo-political roles, exploiting the themes and nodal points pervasive over time in Russian geopolitical imagination. He used to be a 'man of action' or Russian James Bond, a 'macho', an 'environmentalist', a 'father of the nation' (Goscilo, 2013). The list is not exhaustive. One characteristic, however, has been recurrent throughout all his representations, which is 'militarised and sexualised masculinity' (Foxall, 2013, p.134; Eichler, 2006).

This thesis argues, though, that since 2007, when the Winter Olympics were awarded to Sochi, a new script has been added to Putin's image portfolio and the Russian national identity narrative. Putin started to appear publicly as a fit athlete and Russia was repeatedly endorsed as a great sports nation. Mega-events are instrumental in this regard and deserve particular attention in terms of their role in symbolising Russia's evolving geopolitical aspirations. After 'Russia's long "revolutionary decade" – 1991 – 2004 – [when] Russia remained unsatisfied with its new status, but its grand strategy took neither a revanchist nor an

accommodating turn' (Clunan, 2014, p.282), Russia finally adopted conspicuous SP mechanisms in order to reclaim its former status.

Ever since his entrance into upper echelons of power Putin has not only explicitly identified himself with Russia – the state and Russia – the metaphysical construct, he continuously endeavoured to resuscitate public confidence in the state structures and their infallibility (Ispa-Landa, 2003; Russell, 2005; Dennreuther and March, 2008; Foxall, 2013). On a more intangible ideological level, the images of Putin and the qualities they evoked, such as strength, determination, health, confidence, etc. were to enter the national psyche as a template of a new exemplary man, simultaneously giving rise to patriotism interchangeable with pride in the country evoked by confidence in the visionary charismatic leader (Eichler, 2006; Sherlock, 2007; Kolossov and Toal, 2007; Kerr, 2008; Vazquez, 2009). Such an image of Putin bears a close resemblance to a perfect Soviet hero, the New Soviet Person – 'clean and smart, healthy and politically astute… [ready for] self-sacrifice and [in] control over one's emotions' (Grant, 2014, p.731). Notably, it is believed that in case Putin decides to run for the president in 2018 corresponding to the aspirations of Russian people these previously emphasised qualities will be replaced by 'softer' humanistic ones, that is 'instead of a military leader will come a wise patriarch' ('Russian Media: the image of Putin is to become human', *BBC.com*, June 26, 2017).

To an international observer visual representations of Putin send an unambiguous geopolitical message of Russia laying claims at great power. In this regard, Putin, bearing in mind historical importance of military prowess for national unity, has particularly relied on militant patriotism (Sieca-Kozlowski, 2009), generated by the second Chechen campaign to legitimatise his decisions at the beginning of his presidential tenure (Sperling, 2003; Remington, 2009; Wood, 2011). This was the period charged with what Eichler (2006, p.498)

hails as ‘militarised masculinity’ in official representations of Putin. From the mid-2000s, when Russia started to show visible signs of economic recovery and gradually regained confidence in its territorial integrity and internal stability, achieved through whatever means available to the elites, there was a shift form militant nationalism to great power patriotism and proactive foreign policy (Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation 2008, National Security Statement 2009). This was when a string of international sporting events – the 2014 Sochi Olympics and the 2018 FIFA WC among them - entered the government’s agenda (see Strategy of the Development of Physical Culture and Sport in Russian Federation in the period until 2020). Widely seen as Putin’s pet projects in the West, from the elite perspective they, nevertheless, marked a significant shift from military concerns - however important for national self-concept – to ‘performative politics of attraction’ (Grix and Lee, 2013, p.6). Such a voluntary transition from hard power pursuits to SP projects, though forced by emergency, were among other things an attempt to signal Russia’s desire for peaceful coexistence with the West, albeit not on the humiliating terms of the 1990s but on more equal terms of the 21st century, where Russia has a clear voice as well (Ispa-Landa, 2003). Being part of an endeavour to redefine Russian identity in the international politics, they were also a catalyst for domestic identity discourse. Although after the Sochi Olympics Russian foreign policy (see Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation 2016) and its domestic narrative have been radically readjusted and the return of the ‘besieged fortress’ syndrome significantly brought back militant rhetoric, Putin stuck to patriotism as the unifying force, officially naming it national idea in 2016 (‘Putin named Patriotism a National Idea’, *BBC.com*, February 3, 2016). Mega-events, in this respect, neatly fall within the Soviet tradition of creating ‘a ‘togetherness’ and patriotic feeling’ and most importantly, ‘linking members of the

public, through sport, with politics, the Party and, of course, the nation's leader' (Riordan, 2012, p.60).

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided evidence for the claim that the Soviet Union's/Russia's hosting of the Olympics served not simply as an external SP strategy, but first and foremost was used for domestic SP. The latter incorporates the shoring up of state legitimacy vis-à-vis the citizenry and the act of being chosen as an Olympic host and its impact on the development of a national narrative. The national narrative has traditionally incorporated the most impressive of both 'hard' and 'soft' achievements of the nation and its outstanding representatives from various historical periods. Among such nation-defining accomplishments in the 20th century were the victory in the Great Patriotic War and the 1980 Summer Olympic Games. While the sacred status of the victory is clear, the still enduring spiritual and emotional value of the 1980 Olympics for the post-Soviet people make it exceptional among other Games and warrants separate attention. This chapter also discussed (based on the examples of the Afghan and Chechen wars) the importance of military performance for the Russian self-concept and its unifying potential. Accordingly, while the dismal show in Afghanistan precipitated a collapse of the Soviet Empire, the success of the second Chechen operation brought about a 'rediscovery of the imperial nerve in Russia'. Although the Chechen war is part of the national narrative, it does not feature as prominently as the Sochi Olympics. Whereas the former triggered militant nationalism, the Olympics became associated with the transition to a more inclusive, national great power patriotism. Initially envisaged as an SP vehicle, they were to become a symbol both *of* and *for* a new Russia – an image marker internationally but chiefly a catalyst of domestic SP and national narrative. Importantly, the Games also signalled a persistent continuity of the Russian national character and narrative: being endorsed as a

common cause they became a pinnacle (including the resources and effort spent) of grandeur and triumph. The next chapter is dedicated entirely to a comprehensive examination of the political ramifications of a peculiar combination of the Olympic-Crimean effect and the political objectives behind the 2014 Sochi Games - that is Russia's alternative take on SP.

CHAPTER 7: THE SOCHI WINTER OLYMPICS AND RUSSIA'S UNIQUE SOFT POWER STRATEGY

7.1 Introduction

According to Joseph Nye (*Project Syndicate*, December 12, 2014), who coined the concept of SP, Putin 'failed to capitalise on the soft-power boost afforded to Russia by hosting the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi'. With political volatility in the region throughout the year, Russia's ensuing actions – culminating in the secession of Crimea – and its position over the armed conflict in Ukraine, certainly appear to bear this out. The Sochi Olympics were predominantly framed by the Western press as a Russian SP quest and an attempt to obtain belated recognition as a great power. However, Sochi should be understood as a part of a wider package of 'spatial governance' undertaken by Putin's regime. This approach marks 'the return of regional policy to the state's priorities and a (selective) return of the federal state to urban development' (Golubchikov, 2017, p.237). SMEs in this regard are appraised as a primary catalyst of the progress of the periphery, a rare but highly needed opportunity to spur economic growth beyond Moscow and St Petersburg. This chapter argues that the Sochi SME is part of a wider SP strategy – one which is not the same as, for example, the UK's or Brazil's use of such events. For Russia, international status means possessing both soft and hard power resources and being able to use them.

The intention in what follows is to outline how and why Russia's SP strategy does not follow a similar trajectory to, nor is it the same as, other states who have drawn upon SMEs to showcase their nations. Commentators are quick to lump together BRICS countries as the new wave of SMEs hosts, yet the strategies adopted by each and the goals they seek to reach differ greatly (see Horne and Manzenreiter, 2006; Black, 2008; Baviskar, 2014). This is nowhere more evident than in the case of Russia. As this chapter shows, the common denominators of

status-seeking, externally focused, image-improving strategies employed by the vast majority of SMEs hosts cannot be simply extrapolated to Russia's case. The chapter proceeds as follows: first it turns to the Western-centric 'framing' of Russia's actions in particular in relation to the Sochi Winter Olympics in 2014. It then analyses the Kremlin's SP agenda based on the official political discourse and the messages transmitted in the run-up and throughout the course of the Olympic Games. The next section puts forward the idea that the hosting of the Sochi Games and the annexation of Crimea, which conveniently occurred in quick succession, became mutually reinforcing events towards laying the foundations of an emergent new viable national identity, rather than claims for Russia's 'great power' status. This chapter suggests, therefore, that the Russian SP project targets primarily a domestic audience, which represents a stark contrast to the SP agenda of developed and other 'emerging' nations and previous SMEs hosts. Finally, this chapter sketches out the contours of Russia's SP strategy in view of the repercussions of the Ukrainian conflict.

7.2 Western-Centric Approach to the Analysis of Mega-Events

This chapter sets out why Nye and others are mistaken in their assessment of Russia's SP strategy. The simple answer, as this chapter shows, is that viewing and framing the Sochi Olympics as a Russian attempt to obtain belated recognition as a great power is to misunderstand the Games and their meaning for Russia. This chimes with the popular view that elite sport and SMEs in particular, perpetuate and legitimise Western civilisational standards and could be viewed as a variation of soft cultural colonisation.

As Horton and Saunders put it, 'the founding of the International Olympic Committee in 1894 could be said to represent the formal institutionalisation of the Western imperialist model of sport and its associated discourse which, largely, still holds sway today' (2012, p.890). Therefore seen thus, emerging states, including the BRICS countries, attempting to wield SP

through hosting the Olympic Games only stand a chance of success to the extent that their modernities are consistent with a neo-liberal paradigm of development. This is, first of all, due to the fact that irrespective of the hosts' best effort, a critical Western media framing often prevails, unearthing all the deficiencies of the hosts' political system and social order, epitomised in the event preparation process (Manzenreiter, 2010). With an SME serving as a magnifying glass, highlighting positive cultural aspects but also unwelcome truths, developing countries often fail to receive universal acclaim for their alternative modernities (Horton and Saunders, 2012; Mangan, 2012). On the other hand, it raises a question about the tenacity of the hegemonic worldview of the Western media, which self-righteously passes an exclusive sentence without due regard for other possible audiences (Finlay and Xin, 2010). The argument is that the emerging states' SP projects may be more selective, primarily directed at other states with comparable political economies and levels of development, or at states within their region (rather than being designed to embrace the world at large). Brazil is a case in point, as it sets out to secure its position as the leading regional actor in Latin America as well as becoming a global actor (Grix, 2014). In this respect, and taking into account the global reach of the messages transmitted via SMEs, the international objective of developing nations may be twofold: to appeal to the one group of states, thereby wielding SP (Grix and Lee, 2013), while emphatically and assertively informing the others of their intentions. Russia's great power claims, for example, persisting for some time and gaining currency during the Olympics, with little universal attraction potential to them, were rather intended to inform the West of its coveted place in the global political hierarchy. On the other hand, there is a growing reckoning that Western understanding of liberalism and democracy is unlikely to find traction in some nation states and that Russia is not only one such state, but it is also a 'resister state' (Lankina and Niemczyk, *The Washington Post*, April 15, 2014) with

its own distinctive and (potentially) endearing values and leadership style, if not institutions (Pu and Sweller, 2014).

Great powers, or in Russia's case, an aspiring great power, traditionally prioritised domestic audiences through such ambitious projects rather than specifically 'signalling' to foreign publics. As Pu and Sweller state (2014, p.145):

> For rapidly ascending states, in particular, the domestic audience usually trumps the international one […] Because the continued rise of emerging powers is rarely a given, the process of rapid development usually generates generous social and political dislocations, and future growth and internal stability often require fundamental political reforms.

It could be argued, therefore, that the Sochi Olympics were designed above all as a source of domestic SP rather than simply as an external 'signalling' exercise. Such a strategy is not dissimilar to Beijing, which also pursued a politics of 'two level games' (Putnam, 1988). Putnam's phrase refers to the intertwined nature of both international and domestic politics and leads to a more nuanced understanding of SP rather than seeing it simply as an instrumental status marker in the same vein as, for example, attempting to gain 'membership in elite clubs, such as the Group of 8 (G8), permanent membership in the UNSC, [and] leadership positions in international organisations' (Welch, Paul, and Wohlforth, 2014, p.10).

It could, therefore, be further suggested that the main objective of the Russian SP project is to instigate a sense of self-worth, patriotism and to cultivate a viable national idea (see Courmont, 2013 for parallels with China). While sport has always been a major tool of collective identification (Jackson and Haigh, 2008), providing a strong impetus for national identity construction and stimulating ardent nationalistic sentiments, it has been cunningly used by regimes in the past to strengthen the national idea and even infuse it with a new vigour on the eve of conflict. Significantly, war-like rhetoric, or equation of the Games with

the undisguised civilisational face-off where Russia had only two alternatives – either win or perish - was prevalent in the framing of the Sochi Olympics in Russia. This perfectly accords with Risse's (2011, p.603) view that 'the world of 2010 still resembles the cold war and its end, [in that] the main structuring forces are still ideas and discourses'. Thus, the Sochi Olympics were promoted by the Putin government, and this view was eagerly embraced by a large section of the population, as an ongoing war between the West and Russia, which was only strengthened by the belligerent media framing assumed in the West. As a result, the 2014 Winter Olympics served a double purpose, entrusted to them by the ruling elite, to ignite a patriotic sentiment and to be perceived as a unifying cultural symbol, compared to the Second World War in the twentieth century, laying the ground for the emergence of the potent new Russian myth (Persson and Petersson, 2014). Such historical rhetoric prevalent in the framing of the Sochi Olympics relates collectively shared moments of the development of a nation (Grix, 2016). In this respect, Makarychev and Yatsyk (2014) also draw parallels between the Sochi 2014 Games and the annexation of Crimea based on their contribution to what is considered by Putin to be a great power status. These two events served as a force of 'domestic consolidation' behind Putin's aims and a trigger for domestic SP; that is, the attempt to influence a domestic audience by providing them with a growing sense of Russian national narrative (Sochi 2014 Official Report).

Mass opinion polls conducted in Russia in 2014 can be eloquent illustrations of this trend. According to the Russian news agency *Novosti*, the post-Sochi period led to the unprecedented popularity of Putin at home, with him polling an all-time high of 85.9 per cent in May 2014. In 2015, around 46 per cent of respondents believed that the Sochi Olympics led to the improvement of Russia's international prestige, with 36 per cent convinced of its positive role in the rise of patriotic sentiment (wciom, 2015).

7.3 The Sochi Olympics and an Alternative Interpretation of SP

Rather than understanding Sochi as a stepping-stone en route to 'emerging' as a power, Russia viewed the Olympics first and foremost as a belated recognition of its equitable status or growing agency in the global order (Müller, 2014) or as Putin more diplomatically puts it, 'an assessment of our country' (Alekseyeva, 2014, p.160). According to the majority of scholars (Orttung and Zhemukhov, 2014; Persson and Petersson, 2014), the primary objective of the ruling elite was to validate Russia's claims for the re-establishment of national greatness and underscore the continuity of its indispensability in world affairs through the hosting of the Winter Olympics 2014. Alekseyeva has labelled the Games 'Putin's government's brand of modernisation' (2014, p.160). This argument is substantiated by other grand projects through- out the country, such as the reconstruction of Vladivostok for the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit ($20 billion), Universiade Games 2013 in Kazan ($6.9 billion), Skolkovo innovation centre ($15.2 billion), with an image-building apex in shape of the 2018 FIFA World Cup (ibid). Golubchikov (2017) rightly points to Sochi as simply a part of a much wider strategy of 'spatial governance' and warns against 'reductionist' accounts of the use of this SME as a signal of Russia's growing power (to an international and domestic audience). He goes on to suggest that the Russian 'government's key rationales with regard to the regional and urban development are conspicuously underplayed' (2017, p.238). This latter point is significant, because it means that Sochi cannot be understood in isolation, as the massive regional and urban re-development projects throughout Russia provide the context in which the Olympics were built and took place.

Such a modernisation programme is not without its problems. For example, it is a rather piecemeal process which takes place in fits and starts, largely at the expense of other more urgent socially oriented projects and accompanied by omnipresent corruption. Orttung and

Zhemukhov (2014) went as far as to pigeonhole SMEs as an emblematic feature of Russia's political economy, which officially justifies and almost legalises embezzlement and money laundering. Yet, as long as the results are internationally visible and conspicuous enough, the government considers the symbolic target to have been reached with no major deviations from their plan (Tsygankov, 2006).

Rebuffing criticism of the Sochi Olympic Games being a piecemeal, money laundering affair, Russian sources emphasise the long-term strategic interest in the region and refer to the multibillion dollar investments in both eco-cultural and infrastructural revival of the region. As Kosachev (Gorchakovfund, June 10, 2014) puts it, 'Sochi is not "Khalif an hour" but a serious long-term investment, which has potential after the Olympics'.

Investments into sustainable eco-development and restoration of the damaged ecosystem ($95 million), construction of sewage systems and waste recycle plants ($300 million), and development of energy generation system ($1.75 billion) are among current ambitious post-Olympic projects (Gorchakovfund, 2014). This ties in with Golubchikov's point above about Sochi being a part of a wider strategic urban and regional development project.

Currently, the success of the Olympic project is exemplified by the inflow of tourists to Sochi in the first post-Olympic summer, totalling 85 per cent of the hotel capacity. This, however may be attributed not so much to the marketing success of the city as to the international sanctions, depreciating currency and, thus, limited capacity of the population to travel abroad. Some studies (Sakwa, 2011) have also drawn attention to the decisive elements of continuity between 'Putinism' and the political and ideological tradition of the Soviet Union, epitomised among other things by mega-projects, where neither money, nor any other rational

considerations except national pride and awe-inspiring gigantism were ever taken into account.

Orttung and Zhemukhov (2014) compare the rationale behind the Sochi Olympics to those of the Tokyo Games in 1964, which marked the return of Japan to the world stage and which were perceived as an official declaration of its rehabilitation and acceptance into the international community after the Second World War. This comparison is highly misleading, though, due to the presence of more apparent differences than similarities between these two cases. The Sochi Olympics were the first global Russian coming out party after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and, consequently, a symbolic defeat in the Cold War. An event, indeed, comparable in significance for Russian self-identification to the 1964 Tokyo and 1972 Munich Olympics for Japan and Germany, respectively, marking a return of former axis powers to the group of civilised nations (Horton and Saunders, 2012). Russia's reception, however, was not a repetition of Tokyo's open-armed welcome back in 1964. Two things were decidedly different: first, Japan was endorsed by the USA at the time in return for a full-hearted acceptance of democratic values and a repudiation of revisionist sentiments (Tagsold, 2010). Russia, on the other hand, decided to conspicuously 're-emerge' on its own terms. While Japan badly longed for recognition, Russia appears intent to reaffirm its international standing and receive acknowledgement of legitimacy of its newer-relinquished geopolitical and civilisational ambitions (Tsygankov, 2009; Welch and Shevchenko, 2010). Japan openly sided with the USA and remains its loyal ally to this day (Lam, 2007); however, making long-term friends does not seem to be among Russia's chief aims, although its omnipresent soft-power rhetoric might give an impression to a casual observer of the obvious adherence to the politics of attraction (Tsygankov, 2006; Laruelle, 2012). The Tokyo Games were largely a USA project, – inasmuch as they were thoroughly overseen by the USA and should have

exemplified the uncontested success of the American model (Niehaus and Tagsold, 2013). In fact, they turned out to be one of crucial affirmation of American preponderance as 'a society worthy of admiration and deserving emulation' (Brzezinski 1998a, p.8).

Russia's ruthless image-building crusade, or exercise of smart power subject to Russian interpretation, on the contrary, intimidates the West and resurrects its most mortal unconscious fears, which date back to the days of the Cold War or even further back in time (Sakwa, 2011; Suslov, 2012). Deservedly so, because for Russia, finding friends has never meant being unassuming, forthcoming, cooperative or responsive to outer pressures. As a result, the Kremlin has traditionally mistaken smart power, which in effect is a combination of SP and HP (Nye, 2012), for mere influence. Russian elites have rather equated it with military potential, territorial superiority, technological advancement and dominance of culture and language (Sperling, 2003). Disproportionately reliant on coercion and payment to achieve its desired objectives, Russia has persistently squeezed attractiveness out of the equation. Modern realities, however, challenge Russia to follow global trends to stay relevant and competitive, subscribing to SP values seems to be one of them, and thus the prioritisation of SMEs which is part and parcel of SP strategies, could not better conceal Russian true sentiments. Therefore, an assertion that through hosting the Winter Olympics 2014 Russia was not seeking to demonstrate a certain ideology is only partially true, inasmuch as adherence to any ideology different to that of the dominant paradigm of neo-liberalism, taking into account growing disillusionment with the Washington consensus in some parts of the world (Zhang, 2012), is already a very strong point to be made especially when it comes from Russia or China. It might not be entirely clear or eloquently articulated even inside the country, due to the protracted ideological vacuum after the collapse of the Soviet Union

(Welch and Shevchenko, 2010; Suslov, 2012), though, it is obvious that the message that comes through is: ‘Russia is back and to be reckoned with’.

7.4 International Views

Besides the facts directly connected to the SME, the international evaluation of the Sochi Olympics is by and large grounded on previous accounts of all events associated with Russia and its historical precursor – the Soviet Union. Indeed, Russia is not only a formal successor to the Soviet Union, it is also a successor to all pervasive cultural stereotypes of the Soviet era. The international community, stirred up by media framing and liberal governments’ wariness and offhand rejection of alternative routes of development, tends to draw from a set of long-engrained primitive stereotypes when forming its attitude to the still enigmatic Russia (Tsygankov, 2009; Sakwa, 2011), discarding official information and visual images as propaganda. The media are the primary agent in reproducing the resilient perceptions of Self and Other. The Western media storylines, regardless of the context, rely on the classical reductionist division into ‘good and evil’ and ‘friends and foes’. Russia traditionally features as the ideal villain (Miskimmon and O'Loughlin, 2017; Tsygankov, 2017; Benn, 2014). For the time being, Russia, like other developing countries (Dowse and Fletcher, 2018), is incapable of presenting a compelling counter-narrative, which would fascinate the Western publics (Dimeo and Kay, 2004). In fact, Darnell (2014, p.1000) warns that traditional framing of sports events ‘can serve to secure the innocence and benevolence of global sport for Western audiences while insulating them from, and therefore solidifying, the political economy of unequal development’. It does not imply that Russia should despair or be discouraged from further playing the SP game; however, the Kremlin must give up its unrealistically high expectations about changing its image via hosting SMEs.

Interestingly enough, the futility of the recent Russian SP endeavour may be traced back to what Brzezinski (1998a) considers as one of the major reasons behind the Russian loss of influence in Eurasia and defeat in the Cold War. He sees the causes of Russian miseries in the somewhat alien nature of its cultural tradition to Western Europe and subsequent defiance of its growing cultural pre-eminence rooted in distorted and rather arrogant perception on the part of Western Europeans of Russia's inferiority. Furthermore, Rothman (2011) sees the dissemination of liberal ideas and norms, as well as a lack of acceptance of the Soviet system and defiance of its legitimacy in the West, as the causes of the ultimate demise of the Soviet Union and communism. As a result, a global collective consciousness produces an image which is an amalgam of an official political discourse, clichés and occasional personal experience. The Russian government has evidently failed to trigger any fundamental changes in the dominant international image of the country (Nye, *Project Syndicate*, December 12, 2014) due to the lack of coordinated effort or coherent uniform message and given the unprecedented cost of the Games (Marten, 2014), albeit mostly non-sporting.

From the very moment the Winter Olympics 2014 were awarded to Russia in Guatemala in 2007, it was viewed by many as a dubious choice; first and foremost, because a historically unstable and recently war-ravaged region was selected as a location (Persson and Petersson, 2014). The image of the future Games was further exacerbated by Russia's deteriorating relations with the USA and the EU triggered both by discord over Russia's domestic policies, such as treatment of the opposition or civil rights issues (Alekseyeva, 2014), as well as the international publics' indignation over the war in Georgia in 2008. To top it all, the persecution and suppression of the LGBT community and the unresolved conflict with Circassian diaspora also found traction in the West further tarnishing the Games and dissolving the prospects of any SP benefits for the country (Müller, 2014). Scrupulous

coverage of the internal discontent severely threatened the official meta-narrative behind the Games, which portrayed Russia not only as a country growing conscious of its national strengths and with flagrant geopolitical ambitions, but also as a tolerant, inclusive and multicultural community where people enjoy religious and ethnic freedoms and live in full harmony (Sochi 2014 Official Report). Persson and Petersson (2014), however, maintain that Putin's administration pursued an inherently different strategy; knowing that it will get bad publicity irrespective of its own actions, it strived to promote its counternarrative containing as much positive information as possible. The key to this strategy was to secure visibility and make an official view prevail through placing emphasis on quantity rather than quality of the messages. Still, the prevalence of ambitious statements over actual deeds in addition to the absence of fundamental institutional changes (Rutland, 2012) to the system cannot mask certain insincerity and deliberate hypocrisy of the 'New Russia' SP narrative, which essentially has failed to win the hearts and minds of the international publics. A different view exists, however, that the 2014 Sochi Games becoming the most politicised SME in recent history only testifies to the fact that the political fracas surrounding them highlights how Putin resurrected Russia from the darkest decade after the end of the Cold War and became the principal bête noire of Pax Americana (Chaulia, 2014).

7.5 Crimean Gambit – a 'Diversionary' War or a 'Great Power' Dream Come True?

There is a general incomprehension of the reasons behind the annexation of Crimea in the Western media and among academics in view of the lack of any visible hard gains for Russia. The Crimean gambit, allegedly, turned out to be a smokescreen that hid Olympic faults and streamlined triumphant great power rhetoric into a new geo-political dimension (Marten, 2014). Instead of potentially taking the wind out of Putin's great power ambitions, the political coup in Ukraine, taking place simultaneously with the Olympics in Russia, as if

intentionally timed so, brought Russia a large swath of (historically) strategically coveted land. While this internationally condemned move, further exacerbated by the Kremlin's stance on the Ukrainian issue, resulted in strict economic and political sanctions from the West, thus rendering any SP in the traditional sense unattainable, it still fulfilled the most important goal on Putin's (domestic) SP agenda so far – namely it elevated national consciousness to unprecedented levels in post-Soviet history. By doing so, the coup consolidated public support for Putin's political persona, once again raising 'demophily', or the unconditional love of the Russian population (Fish, *The Washinghton Post*, April 3, 2014). This 'demophily' marked his rule in the 2000s and visibly weakened by the turn of the decade, not least because of the unquenched corruption and money laundering, ubiquitously plaguing the Sochi 2014 project. Putin's actions may seem clearly pointless, considering how bent he was on promoting Russia as a reliable international partner on security issues, as well as committed to peaceful resolution of conflicts and the inviolability of post-Cold War international political system. Yet, Fish (ibid) sees all Putin's internationally self-discrediting moves as a justified trade-off for his popularity at home, arguing that 'the thrust into Ukraine seems to Putin to be the perfect mystique preserver'.

Putin in 2014–2015, as noted by many commentators, bears little resemblance to the man of the 2000s (Foxall, 2013; Goscilo, 2013). Nevertheless, speaking of what defines his values, beliefs and the character of his decisions and, henceforth, the contours of modern Russian policy, both domestic and foreign, as early as 2008, Evans observed that new Russian reality, albeit successful so far, has become an incarnation of a sole man's worldview. What can help to shed light on an incomprehensible, from the West's perspective, annexation of Crimea, is that Putin's actions have never been 'ad hoc responses to immediate conditions' (ibid, p.901), but part of a clear-cut, viable strategic vision, which may be summed up as 'Great Russia'. In

order to be viable to a domestic audience, this vision has to be replete with symbolism of successive concrete gestures. Irrespective of substantial repercussions, the Sochi 2014 Olympic Games as well as the Crimean gambit could not fit Putin's plan better. In the eyes of Putin, these two events, reinforcing one another, is what both represents and lays the ground for 'basic national values and tasks' (Putin, Annual Address to the Federal Assembly 2003), and thus helps overcome societal and class divisions. On the one hand, endorsement of insurgents and the annexation of Crimea put an end to the discourse of Russia as a normal great power, unravelling the inconsistency of government policies. On the other hand, it may be argued, that Russia only lived up to its demonised image prevalent in the West. Apparently acting against its own SP interests, among other things, was largely instigated by the constant neglect of Russian opinions on global strategic issues, such as NATO enlargement, the Transnistria conflict, missile defence development in Europe and global democracy promotion through unconstitutional government changes, to name but a few (Tsygankov, 2014). The same holds for offsetting the Russian energy interests in the Caspian area and rejecting any potential partnerships there. What Gaddy and Ickes (*Brookings*, May 22, 2014) represent as the 'missing quadrant' was being filled in: a strong but 'bad' Russia, not the weak and good Russia of the 1990s, the weak and bad Russia presented by its critics, or the good and strong Russia extolled by its friends.

The unwillingness of Western elites to find common ground and a way for Russian integration, let alone accept its claims for a great power status, logically led to an escalation of existential and security concerns and ensuing assertive neo-revisionist behaviour (Sakwa, 2015). The ascendancy of neo-revisionism was further bolstered by the so-called colour revolutions in Ukraine in 2004 and Georgia in 2003, the core inspirations of which was

Russia as an irreconcilable enemy, as an 'irrelevant other' to be dissociated and broken away from at all costs.

Russian foreign policy after the Sochi Olympics, as it currently is, might for a long time invalidate the Western-oriented SP discourse, or an approach that even remotely resembles Nye's initial concept, even if subject to Russian interpretation. Having been at the crossroads of embracing international engagement or 'hegemonic order' or 'veering towards outright revisionism' (Sakwa 2011, p.968), Russia seems to have made up its mind in favour of the latter. What this implies for Russian SP aspirations is that if they are not to give way to unrestrained hard power politics altogether, they are bound to change the vector to the Islamic World. As Sakwa notes, 'Russia would once again run the danger of becoming the core of the renewed "third-world" revisionist front, aligned with some of the Islamic world's critique of Western values, an outcome that the country's Eurocentric elites sought to avoid' (2011, p.968). Russia's intervention in Syria appears to bear this out.

There is a view, however, that instead of compensating for lack of SP, Russian use of force may indeed unprecedentedly add up to its SP. What is more, Russia by no means is trying to charm the West anymore and, indeed its neo-revisionist behaviour will have further consequences. However, its condemnation 'of the decay of liberal world order, the West's double standards in application of international law, and its ostensibly weakening moral authority' (Lankina and Niemczyk, *The Washington Post*, April 15, 2014) certainly expresses the view of a large number of the population globally, and championed by Russia and the charismatic Putin will assert its influence even though it may not be the type of SP as articulated by Nye. The conflict in Ukraine, as such, is an example of the tensions which arise not because Russian SP is weak, but because the regions where it is strong are not allowed sufficient self-expression and self-representation.

Even though Putin initially looked for opportunities for closer cooperation with the EU and the USA, it is maintained that it was done not out of a desire for institutional and political integration, but exclusively as a pursuit of national economic interest and political realism, albeit not charged with ideological 'grand designs' (Lavrov 2007, p.8) or 'missionary functions' (Putin, Annual Address to the Federal Assembly 2007). This would not have been inconsistent, however, with realism with a strong dose of ideology (Caldwell, 2007) that marked Russian foreign diplomacy for centuries. Evans (2008, p.910) argues that Putin was fully aware of the pitfalls of radical ideology, such as a possibility of a resumption of an ideological struggle with the West, which the head of state believed to be outright disadvantageous for Russia. Evans (ibid) duly pointed out that the rise and nature of a new Russian ideology, as well as ensuing political moves, depends upon the Kremlin to the same extent as they depend upon the eagerness of its Western counterparts either to engage with Russia on equal terms or continue to treat it as an inferior partner. The Sochi Olympics, however, symbolically marked a watershed moment both in world politics and Russian national identity ambitions.

7.6 Sports Mega-Events as Building Blocks for a New Russian National Idea

Apart from dealing with a number of common challenges every dictatorship encounters on the way to democracy (e.g. economic reforms and transition to pluralism), Russia came across a rather more fundamental problem of a formation of a viable national idea to glue together a multi-ethnic state, reflect and inspire a transformation of consciousness, and light up a vision of a worthwhile collective future (Sperling, 2003; Tsygankov, 2009; Sakwa, 2011). The reason behind the demise of a coherent unifying national idea for millions of Russian citizens lies in their disillusionment with the inflated Communist ideology, which had kept a Soviet Utopia alive for more than 70 years. Although considered by Putin and a large proportion of

the multi-ethnic Eurasian population as the greatest geopolitical disaster of the twentieth century, the Soviet Union could not evade a humiliating defeat and fragmentation. It is evident that a formulation of a national idea in Russia is yet to take place, something that is holding up the nation-building process (Tolz, 1998). An emergent Russian national idea will essentially be rooted in its history, the mentality of its citizens and elite, and will be bound to assume features of the political regimes which have shaped the country over the course of time (Laruelle, 2012; Rutland, 2012). The central feature pertaining to the ideology formation process in the newly established democracies is an equal possibility of swaying into either ethnic exclusionism, of which an inflated sense of patriotism is an example, or towards civic liberalism with corresponding consequences for the country and geostrategic realities (Sperling, 2003).

The use of military vocabulary in the context of the Olympics demonstrates an interesting paradox. Outwardly, that is to the Western onlooker, Russia wants to appear a benign and responsible, though strong and ambitious, agent in IR, committed to SP ideals. Inwardly, that is, to the domestic audience, Russia sends a message which is meant to ignite a certain hostility against an outside world and to juxtapose 'us against them' and thus to use the West as a dissociative group in this identity building enterprise. An attempt to evoke a war-like patriotism is also grounded in the absence of other potent unifying memories apart from victory in the Second World War, which could arouse pride and be credible to a multi-ethnic, multimillion population.

The year after the Sochi Olympics Russia was characterised by what Makarychev and Yatsyk (2014, p.67) see as a 'dominating trend towards an increasingly more pronounced imperial identity and its Anti-Western reverberations'. It did not happen out of the blue, however. As far back as 2007, the concept of 'sovereign democracy' started to feature in official rhetoric as

a model with alleged global SP potential, similar to the Beijing Consensus based on economic success and a centralised state, considering that the Western liberal democracy is imperfect and not universally applicable (Polyakov, 2007; Evans, 2008). Undoubtedly, any sort of Russian SP promotion or such concrete projects as SMEs would have been impossible without the presence 'of a relatively coherent, emotionally charged, and conceptually interlocking, set of ideas' (Hunt 1987, p.15), which constitute an ideology. The ideology of contemporary Russia dates back to the coining of the notion of 'sovereign democracy' by Vladislav Surkov in 2006.

This concept as such implies that instead of mechanically copying other countries' 'experiences' (Putin, Annual Address to the Federal Assembly 2007) there is an inalienable right of a nation state to define not only their contours and foreign policy, but also to independently establish the foundations of its own national identity (Putin, Annual Address to the Federal Assembly 2005) and henceforth envisaged future. In this respect, the Sochi Olympics were expected to provide the Russian people with a future-looking national symbol. They were to become a point of reference for a new Putin-ruled generation of people, a reinvigorating milestone for the new glorious national identity. Although born out of the heroics of the Second World War, space explorations, world-class culture and cutting-edge science, this identity depreciated in the turmoil of the 1990s and has little relevance for the youth of the twenty-first century. In this respect, SMEs are to deal with the pervasive habit of historical self-referencing. In more pragmatic terms, 'Putinism' as an ideology is based on a negation of the 1990s, while continuing its fundamental projects: 'marketisation, democratisation, and international integration' (Sakwa 2011, p.961).

Obvious contradictions in this new ideology may be put down to Putin's propensity to accommodate deeply conflicting visions of Russian identity, that is of the Westernisers and

Easternisers (Tsygankov, 2006; Laruelle, 2012), the primary concern of which are integration vs. national autonomy, democracy vs. sovereignty, ideology vs. pragmatism. Not logically justified from the West's perspective, the Kremlin's policy towards Ukraine is, nevertheless, in perfect compliance with domestic civilisational discourse, in particular with the expansionist view that Russia 'is powerful enough to deploy its soft power coercively and without regard for the ex-republics desire to develop relationships with the European Union and the United States' (Tsygankov 2009, p.356).

This paradigmatic dichotomy, in addition to exogenous factors, is identified by Sakwa (2011) as a stumbling block on Russia's road to a fully-fledged international integration and what precludes it from occupying an acceptable place in the hierarchy of nations. He, therefore, assigns a central role to establishing a compromise between an international integration and a strong state with a new symbiotic national identity.

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter argued that the Kremlin forefronted the domestic over the international dimension in its SME soft power strategy. The vast majority of sports mega-events SP strategies are outward looking and intended to help the host 'emerge' in terms of economic and political development. Russia did not use the SMEs in the same manner as most other states, emerging or otherwise. Instead, the Sochi Olympic Games and subsequent annexation of Crimea, while exemplifying the application of both soft and hard power, respectively (Nye's so-called 'smart power'), were an attempt to lend a forward-looking dimension to a traditionally backward-looking, nostalgic Soviet-era and imperialist-rooted national identity discourse. It seems the domestic SP project has succeeded so far, given the improvement of Putin's approval ratings from 54 per cent in 2013 (Ray, 2014), to 75 per cent just after the Olympics (*RT*, 2015) and an extraordinary 86 cent in February 2015 (Saeed, 2015).

Thus, while most sports mega-events SP strategies are intended to help the host boost their international prestige, the Russian case was different with its emphasis on a domestic audience. Indeed, there appears to be signs of the mobilisation of a Russian national consciousness and self-identification. It remains to be seen whether the arising ideology becomes a resuscitating inspiration for the nation or a spiritual straightjacket or developmental trap. As for the international aspect, Nye (*Project Syndicate*, December 12, 2014) made it clear that not only did Russia fail to capitalise on the Sochi Olympics as a source of SP, its ultimate interpretation of the concept has little to do with what he initially envisaged.

As this chapter attempted to show, such an assessment is too 'Western'; that is, it does not allow for alternative views of Russia's strategy. For example, Lankina and Niemczyk (*The Washington Post*, April 15, 2014) suggest that the West runs the risk of underestimating the sources and reach of Russian attractiveness to others. Russian SP is not meant for people not already sharing ethnic or cultural ties with Russia. That is, it is neither expansionist nor an aggressive imperialist idea, bent on subduing cultures and communities in order to integrate them into multifaceted Russian civilisation, nor is it a cosmopolitan evangelism for Soviet people. Moreover, despite a visible blow the Russian economy suffered as a result of sanctions and a depreciating currency, it still remains the most influential among the post-Soviet states, being thus far indispensable for its neighbours.

While some argue that Putin's decisions will be fatal for his authoritarian neo-revisionist system in the long run, there is a growing understanding that Putin's actions could have been defensive rather than offensive (Tsygankov, 2014; Sakwa, 2015). It is the so-called 'war to stop NATO enlargement' – an issue that has been the most inflammatory bone of contention between Moscow and Washington ever since the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Continuously ignoring the Kremlin's pleas to stop the block's advancement, Russia believes that the West had its way, thus legitimately raising the Kremlin's security concerns and testing Putin's temper to its limits. Therefore, prognoses of Putin's system's imminent dissolution may be a little hasty without an in-depth understanding of the peculiarities and dynamics of Russian public thought, which historically defy analogy with any Western case. One thing is clear for now: the conflict in Ukraine challenges the essence and sustainability of the Kremlin's international SP proposition, and its recovery would require strategic actions. The outcome of the Ukrainian affair, which became a fully-fledged civilisational contest between Atlantisim and Eurasianism, liberal democracy and authoritarianism, will largely define Russian SP and great power ambitions and prospects for a long time to come.

In view of the prevalent insecurity about Russia's potential foreign policy moves, the next chapter through the analysis of the cultural programme of the 1980 Moscow and the 2014 Sochi Olympic ceremonies attempts to trace the evolution of Russia's identity and interests. Importantly, chapter 8 also sets out to understand the internalisation of Russia's identity by its significant other, the West. The outcome of this endeavour, in turn, from the premises of social constructivism may contain the key to Russia's previous foreign policy decisions as well as lend some predictability to its future behaviour in the international arena. Chapter 9, in contrast, addresses the nation-building functions of the 2014 Sochi Olympics and specific mechanisms applied in this context. Chapter 9, thus, further concentrates on the issue of domestic SP. These became the key themes which transpired in the process of analysis of state documents and interviews the author took with the authority figures in Russia. Chapter 10 also examines the essence of Russia's external Olympic SP strategy and explores in detail Russia's sports diplomacy, which mirrors its more formal and strategic foreign policy line.

CHAPTER 8: MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL, WHO IS THE FAIREST OF THEM ALL: THE MOSCOW 1980 AND SOCHI 2014 OLYMPIC CEREMONIES AS A REFLECTION OF RUSSIA'S EVOLVING IDENTITY AND INTERESTS AND THEIR INTERNALISATION BY THE WEST – RUSSIA'S SIGNIFICANT OTHER

8.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the comparative interpretation of the 1980 Moscow and 2014 Sochi Olympic ceremonies by the representative media outlets in Great Britain and the USA: Russia's significant others. In the process, this chapter attempts to uncover the most persistent facets of Russia's identity, as well as to trace which aspects of its national narrative Russia had to let go eventually in the course of the 34 years that separate the two Olympics. Apart from placing the spotlight on Russia's evolving identity and interests, this chapter also essentially investigates the internalisation of Russia's identity by Great Britain and the USA. Taking place in the context of the Olympics, this could automatically be seen as a dramatic litmus test to Russia's SP efforts. The theoretical approach embraced for this purpose is social constructivism. In contrast to deterministic and reductionist IR theories such as, for example, realism (Morgenthau, 1954), neo-realism (Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2011) and neoliberalism (Keohane, 1984; Lebow, 2008), which hold that identities are exogenous to the IR system in that they come as fixed and given (Wendt, 1994), social constructivism sees identity in terms of the 'self/other nexus' (Neumann, 1996, p.142; Hopf, 2005; 2010). One of its main tenets, accordingly, is that identity is construed as 'a reflection of an actor's socialisation' (Wendt, 1992, p.404). In line with constructivism, national identity is predicated on a differentiation from significant others, who at the same time embody 'the meaningful context for the self's existence and development' (Tsygankov, 2012, p.21). In other words, as observed by Neumann (1994, p.64), 'identity is inconceivable without difference', which

means that ‘since the production of identity and of difference - of self and other - proceed together, they will also colour each other’. For example, in contrast to the USA/Russia identity dynamics, which are traditionally defined by power and strength balance and material capabilities, in the Europe/Russia mutual identity formation process ‘differentiation is often made in terms of stating moral superiority (civilised vs barbarian, democratic vs authoritarian) or even in terms of ethnicity’ (Neumann, 1994, p.69). According to Neumann (2008, p.133), throughout the course of history this has meant that ‘[o]nly those peoples whose political system closely resembled the European one were classified as civilised’. The image of all the others, in turn, and Russia was traditionally among these misfits; it vacillated between ‘barbarians’ and ‘savages’. The centrality of the identity discourse for the Sochi Olympics, its unremitting nature, and its intensification on the eve of the 2018 presidential elections and the FIFA WC, as well as being an inalienable presence of the West as a benchmark for Russia’s identity be it aspirational or dissociative is partially explained by the next citation from Neumann (2008, p.129):

> The persistence of identity politics suggests that Russia’s quest for recognition as a great power has not been a successful one. This is because, if an identity claim is successful, it forms part of the horizon of the political debate rather than its substance. Recognition of Russia as great power can only be given by great powers that are firmly established as such. Historically, this means the European powers to the West of Russia.

A cyclical longing to join Europe and to be like Europe meant that Russia, after the disintegration of the USSR, desperately tried to take a place in the Western neo-liberal world order, which essentially entailed ‘a rejection of any universalising mission, that is a rejection of Russia as a model for others to follow’ (Hopf, 2013, p.337). Although by the time the Sochi Olympics opened charming the West was scarcely the first priority on the government’s agenda, an inherent desire to appeal and belong to the West could be the reason why there were no messianic or ideological inferences during the Sochi ceremonies. In fact, up until the

aftermath of the Sochi Olympics, the place of Russia's 'negative Other that must be rejected or transcended' (Hopf, 2013, p.333) was firmly occupied by the Soviet self. This, in effect, meant that there was a consensus among political elites and society regarding the need for drastic reforms in archaic dysfunctional structures and corrupt institutions of the Soviet type in order to lay the foundations of a new democratic Russia. Such sentiments implied deliberate effort to tackle resilient Soviet bureaucracy and shed its political and economic legacy, which to a significant extent mirrored that which the West required from Russia. What appears particularly striking today, in view of the readjustment of identity dynamics, is that until the Ukrainian crisis broke off, 'positive references to the contemporary West as Russia's aspirational Other [were] made primarily before domestic audiences' (ibid, p.336). The current national narrative, by contrast, comes to bear ever more resemblance with that of the Soviet type, which at any times was 'devoid of any positive identification with the West at all' (ibid).

During recent years the West, therefore, has evolved from Russia's 'aspirational Other' to Russia's 'dissociative Other' (Hopf, 2010). This occurred to a significant extent due to the Western treatment of Russia as an inferior and the West's unwillingness to welcome Russia into the fold by and large under the vague pretext of 'Russia's rationality of government [being deviant] from present-day hegemonic neo-liberal models' (Neumann, 2008, p.128). Such dynamics represent one of the core constructivist tenets, which holds that an actor's definition of itself necessarily mirrors the behaviour and attitudes of significant others (Zehfuss, 2001, p.326). Therefore, the post-Sochi identity for Russia was bound to emerge at the crossroads of intensive multiple external Olympic-triggered discourses. Importantly, current revisions of Russia's national identity as distinct from the West or, better still, as representing the only 'true Europe' (Neumann, 2016, p.1383), mean an eventual readjustment

of its interests and as it were an SP proposition. The ultimate evolution of Russia's SP proposition, which, however, as previously is likely to hinge predominantly on high culture, will be evaluated based on a variety of alternative world views. In the case of the West, Russia's SP effort is thus increasingly likely to be assessed not purely on its own merits, but rather held hostage to what will be further seen as an incompatible or even hostile regime type and mounting irreconcilable political differences. As a result, Russia's SP message in the foreseeable future faces the fate of either 'a partial rejection', or worse, 'a radical reinterpretation' (Oettler, 2015, p.245).

The Sochi Olympic Ceremonies, thus, lend themselves to study as an identity marker as they both represent a cathartic moment of global socialisation and visibility for Russia (Alekseeva, 2014; Muller, 2014; Persson and Petersson, 2014), as well as being a threshold for Russia's national narrative. Taking into account 'the representational capacity of sport to promote nationalism and dramatise dominant ideological understandings of "us" versus "them"' (Scherer and Cantelon, 2013, p.45), as well the indispensability of inclusion/exclusion criteria for the development of a cohesive national narrative (Schlesinger, 1991), SMEs and ceremonies in particular represent the perfect venue for identity discourses.

In Russia's case, the effect of the Olympics and the ceremonies can be assumed to be more profound than elsewhere, as like Spartakiads and sports parades during the Soviet times, they remain 'a powerful visual ''programme of identity'' (Grant, 2013, p.124). The potency of the Olympic ceremonies and the previous *fizkultura* parades in Russia to convert the masses towards a particular cause lies in deep-rooted Orthodox traditions (for the discussion of the role of *fizkultura* parades in the substitution of Christianity by the personality cult in the Soviet Union, see chapter 4). As a result, Luo's (2010, pp.771-772) idea that the Olympic 'secular rituals are as functional and communicative, if not more so, as the religious ones' in

that they ‘are equally capable of staging social discourses and producing ‘‘unquestionable doctrines’’, based on what one imagines’ is particularly resonant in Russia’s context. Luo’s exploration of the 2008 Beijing Olympic ceremonies from an anthropological perspective is particularly illuminating for the current research, as analogously to this study’s proposition regarding the Sochi Olympics, it suggests that the Chinese Games were first and foremost a ‘self-entertainment for the nation’ (p.779). Similar to the Sochi Olympics, they turned out to be ‘a ritual largely performed for the people themselves rather than for visitors’, not least because the international audience ‘found it difficult to read the underlying meanings’ (ibid). In the end, the Beijing opening ceremony, quite like Sochi’s, ‘rendered itself opaque’ due to the inability to put international publics ‘into the frame necessary to understand [the ceremony’s] historical depth and complexity’ (Luo, p.773). The similarities do not end there. An uncanny parallel that emerges between the two Games, which is likely to be replicated by other possible authoritarian hosts in the future, is that both Olympics were ‘national in every sense’ (2010, p.772). That is, in contrast to the Olympic Games held in advanced states, which are as a rule a local or regional affair at the most, both the 2008 Beijing and the 2014 Sochi Games were preceded by what Luo calls a ‘Biblical-like seven years of nation-building’ (ibid). In terms of the ceremonies, whereas China promoted the ideology of harmony and Russia refrained from any preaching as such, both states through the ritual of the ceremony, which in both instances promised ‘a desired transformation of [the state’s] international status, helped to regain consciousness and release tension’ (ibid, p.779), were a ‘recovering from a traumatic modern history’ (ibid, p.771). In China’s case, inner insecurities were conditioned by the perversions of communism, whilst in Russia they occurred due the painful accommodation of its communist past and transition to democracy. The most striking similarity, however, lies in the following paradox. Akin to Russia, which albeit juxtaposes

itself against the West and still requires its validation, China, although rejoicing in unity during the Olympics, is also arguably ‘a nation that needs approval from others before it can approve of themselves’ (ibid, p.779).

The problem of double coding is instrumental for the current analysis, which according to Arning (2013) means that the same symbols and themes are interpreted differently by local and global audiences. Whereas iconic signs contain a universal meaning and thus are easily decipherable by an international audience, symbolic signs are endowed with a meaning constructed in the host country and are resonant exclusively within the host’s population. Arning (2013, p.523) exhaustively explores how Olympic ceremonies through double coding simultaneously forge ‘internal cohesion and project soft power’. As previously shown, in Russia, ceremonies clearly fulfil the first task. Arning also posits that general studies of the Olympic ceremonies so far have undertaken an analysis of the cultural programmes and have ‘made interpretive leaps on the overall thematic narrative, [yet failed] to draw potentially illuminating comparisons of previous and subsequent opening ceremonies' (ibid, p.524). The fact that Russia has hosted two Olympic Games championed and organised by different regimes offers an unprecedented opportunity to trace changes in national narrative through the ceremonies, which are deservedly regarded as ‘codes of communication’ (ibid, p. 525). In this way, it becomes possible to gain a glimpse of the state’s envisaged future identity and national interests, and consequently determine its foreign policy priorities.

The majority of the studies that have undertaken an analysis of the interplay of national identity and the Olympics and the complexity of presenting a coherent national narrative during the ceremonies did so from the vantage point of social constructivism (Hargreaves, 1992; Dyreson, 1992; Tomlison and Young, 2005). The originality of the current analysis stems thus not from its constructivist embeddedness, but rather from the synthesis of

interpretations of the cultural programme of the Moscow 1980 and the Sochi 2014 Olympic Games by the Western press. What this effectively does is present a snapshot of the evolution of Russia's identity over 34 years, and chart the changes in its reading in the West in the context of similar events. To an extent, this thesis endeavours to demystify Russia and, by identifying persistent nodal points as well as contentious points in its national narrative, lend some predictability to its future self and interests; a predictability, which, however, 'derives not from imposed homogeneity, but from appreciation of difference' (Hopf, 1998, p.200). This ambition is predicated on the constructivist premise that:

> Identities offer each state an understanding of other states, its nature, motives, interests, probable actions, attitudes, and role in any given political context. Understanding another state as one identity, rather than another, has consequences for the possible actions of both (ibid, p. 193).

The Western reading of Russia's identity is, likewise, crucial for Russia's understanding of itself. One of the central thrusts of social constructivism is that 'identities are only useful if they are interpreted by others' (Scanlon, 2015). The mere fact that Russia, and previously the USSR, took foreign media approval to heart demonstrates its vulnerability and self-consciousness as well as the role of significant others in the construction and legitimisation of Russian identity. This is in agreement with the constructivist premise that a 'state does not exclusively give itself an identity. Through intersubjective beliefs about what behaviours and actions mean, others confer identity upon the state. That could counter or be consistent with what the state is trying to promote' (Scanlon, 2015, p.38). If Russia's ultimate aim is to be recognised as a great power, then, according to Neumann (2008, p.147), 'Russia under Putin is playing the wrong game'. By hosting the Olympics, however, the Kremlin attempted precisely 'to demonstrate strength and power that is recognised as being of a sort which [potentially could make] its wielder a great power by the light of firmly ensconced great powers' (ibid). Scanlon, in his excellent work, has shown that SMEs are prime agents for

promoting identity, yet he did not warrant attention the interpretation of identity by significant others. Bearing in mind that 'the producer of the identity is not in control of what if ultimately means to others [and that] the intersubjective structure is the final arbiter of meaning' (Hopf, 1998, p.175), this dissertation in general and the analysis of the media response/framing aim precisely to fill this gap and to show how Russia's Olympic identity has been internalised in a certain temporal and geopolitical context by its significant other, that is, the West.

The current study also posits that Russia represents a peculiar case because both the Games and the ceremonies are not only venues to signal what it is and what it wants to be; significantly, they are transformative agents. As a result, in contrast to Scanlon (2015, p.35) who argues that SMEs in terms of identity 'reproduce what has been constructed', in Moscow'80 the values of the Games were indeed very similar to the Soviet ethos and were to an extent internalised. As Grix and Lee (2013, p.8) observed, through the appropriation of the values of sport, hosts 'champion and collectively celebrate these within their own distinctive cultural, social and political values'. The similarity of the Soviet and the Olympic philosophies thus places the Games in the perfect setting. In Sochi 2014, the transformative effect of the spectacle and the feedback of the global audiences, which is the focus of this chapter, have significantly augmented Russian collective identity and have given impetus to reshaping government policy. The promotion of state patriotism is one example. If the Moscow'80 Games for the USSR fulfilled the highest order vocation of SMEs, which according to Roche (2000, pp.9-10) are an opportunity to 'emphasise [the host's] claim to having a leading status, mission and destiny in the world international order and world history', at the 2014 Sochi Olympics Russia was making sense of itself and its place in the world. The international tasks of the Sochi Olympics, accordingly, appear to lie at opposite ends of the spectrum. As Roche (2008, p.288) suggests, '[n]ations may also use the Games to

mark a new stage at that development, enabling them to set forth a new national identity and image'. This thesis posits that Russia's case is even more nuanced as it was neither a self-validation, like for example the 1980 Moscow Olympics, nor was it a coming out party, like the 1988 Seoul Games. Although they have a lot in common with the 2008 Beijing Games, which indeed were both of the above, the 2014 Sochi Olympics are fundamentally different. A comparison with the 1964 Tokyo and 1972 Munich Games, albeit convenient for some as the three host states lost their wars at some point – the axis powers were defeated in WWII and Russia came up short in the Cold War – is also inaccurate. The 2014 Sochi Olympics were rather a grand public exercise at self-reflection. Although theoretically the Winter Olympics were a smaller event, the international media's reading of the Sochi ceremonies predictably benchmarked them against the grandiose shows that took place in Beijing in 2008 (Herszenhorn, *The New York Times*, February 7, 2014; Mendick, *The Telegraph*, February 8, 2014) and London in 2012 (Rice, *The Independent*, February 7, 2014; Dejevsky, *The Guardian*, February 13, 2014; *CBS News*, February 7, 2014). The reason for this was the imperial identity of the three hosts, which one way or another shone out during the ceremonies. In Britain's case, the embrace of a post-imperial inclusive identity has been successfully finalised to an extent with the aid of the Olympic ceremonies (Oettler, 2015); in China's case, the ceremonies promulgated the resurgence of neo-imperialist hegemonic ambitions (Caffrey, 2010). In Russia, the ceremonies attempted to accommodate the identities of two empires, the Tsarist and the Soviet, and to convince the world and its own people of Russia's right to an equitable place amongst the great powers of the twenty-first century. With the West logically unwilling to make space for any potential challengers and revisit the incumbent world order, as was the case in China (Finlay and Xin, 2010), the Sochi ceremonies sparked Cold War rhetoric. Meanwhile, what academic analyses of ceremonies do

is fulfil one of the crucial constructivist promises and 'return culture and domestic politics to international relations theory' (Hopf, 1998, p.194). This means that they set out to unravel what 'features of domestic society, culture, and politics' constitute domestic identity and how they might 'constrain and enable state identity, interests and actions abroad' (ibid, p.195).

Setting out from the premise that by the means of a cultural programme the host shows its idealised or envisaged identity and simultaneously sends a set of dramatic messages to the global community and exercises the 'politics of attraction' (Grix and Lee, 2013, p.6), through a thematic analysis this chapter traces which components of the 1980 Moscow Olympics ceremonies caught media attention in Britain and the USA, exploring how their symbolism was interpreted. The author's interest in the Western press' readings of the ceremonies is conditioned by the following consideration. As observed by Oettler (2015, p.245) in her investigation of the international decoding of the 2012 London opening ceremony, 'the press tends to be heavily involved in the reproduction of dominant ideologies'. For the purposes of comparison with the initial messages and the symbolism invested into the ceremonies by the host, the author also resorted to an analysis of the Soviet press reviewing the Games. This was conducted taking into account the previous consideration pertinent to the Western press, as well as Thomas and Antony's (2015, p.494) suggestion that 'the news media's response could be considered a 'second-order' construction' in terms of interpreting a national identity. Therefore, the media becomes integral for its internalisation by the people. This happens to be the case precisely because:

> citizens cannot possibly experience the entirety of their citizenry, [and] newspapers serve a critical role in overcoming geographical boundaries and promoting collective identification with the nation (ibid).

By doing so, the author vividly exposes an all-encompassing collision of two ideologies in parallel interpretations of one isolated event and the same set of symbols. Instrumental for this

examination is what Hall (2006) calls an asymmetry between the producer and the receiver of the message. According to Hall (p.173), the latter invariably adjusts the initial message to his/her 'framework of reference', fundamentally stripping it of its intended meaning and thus fine-tuning the effect. At the same time, the author found that writing a corresponding section on the Russian press framing of the Sochi ceremonies would have been superfluous as the responses, albeit mostly positive, were not ideologically loaded. The pervasive conflict of developmental paradigms in context with these Olympics ceremonies was thus more apparent in the Western media's framing rather than in the Russian press, where, as was also the case during the Moscow Games, much more attention was given to positive reactions to the ceremonies in the Western media than to the pageants themselves. This fact, in turn, is instrumental for the current inquiry because it supports the thesis argument about the unyielding importance of the West as Russia's significant other, and as a benchmark for its identity dynamics. Regarding the evolution of Russia's identity and interests, this was perfectly manifest in the cultural symbols used in the ceremony, whereas its internalisation/interpretation by the West was self-evident and did not require a separate review in the Russian press.

In a nutshell, this study pursues three aims. Firstly, it attempts to uncover the changing and pervasive tenets of Russian identity by focusing on the most emblematic elements of its two Olympic Games. Secondly, it endeavours to decode the main messages of the two Olympics and, by comparing them, to follow the evolution of Russian interests and by default its foreign policy priorities. Finally, by comparing the tone and framing of the Olympics by the international media, this study analyses the effectiveness of Russian SP efforts and the evolution of its image in the world. Below, the author sets out how the Moscow ceremonies

were framed in the Western press and how different such framings were from the images that the Soviet state aspired to project.

8.2 An Interpretation of the Cultural Programme of the Ceremonies from a Western Perspective and Attendant Ideological Paradigm

British newspaper reports concerning the Moscow Olympics opening ceremony were as much about the pageant itself as about the partisan policy of the British government towards the Soviet Union and the media complicity in making the Olympics into an accessory. The commentators almost unanimously lamented the fact that the publics were deprived the chance of forming an unbiased and balanced opinion about the Moscow Olympics. For fear of inculcation of the enemy ideology and as part and parcel of the boycott, the planned coverage of the Olympics was curtailed from 170-180 hours to a mere 40 hours on ITV and BBC. Such politics of the broadcasters and Thatcher's staunch position aimed to reduce the first socialist Olympics to an ordinary 'news event' ('TV to slash coverage of the Olympics', *The Guardian*, June 6, 1980, p.24).

Fiddick of *The Guardian* (21 July, 1980a, p.11) argued in this regard that such an approach to the Moscow Games set 'an unfortunate precedent' and largely violated 'the basic principles of a free broadcasting system, [which] is to show the events, not to hold them back'. Meanwhile, Steele (July 21, 1980, p.6), also of *The Guardian*, drew attention to the fact that Soviet television on its part edited the show to make their preferred storyline prevail. For example, it 'sidestepped the issue' of several countries opting for the Olympic flag instead of the national one (ibid) and the absence of several teams at the parade 'to demonstrate varying degrees of disapproval of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan' (Brasher and McIlvanney, *The Observer*, June 20, 1980, p.1). Not that there was much need for this extra effort, as according to Craig R. Whitney of *The NY Times*, the protest gestures were simply lost 'in the vastness of the

stadium, the roar of the crowd, the blare of martial music'. Steele offered another example of the cunning Soviet propaganda machine at work as one of its leading foreign-language outlets, *Progress*, a month before the Games was 'preparing articles quoting anonymous athletes and journalists saying that the Games had been (in the past tense) marvellous' (*The Guardian*, June 28, p.6). This incident, certainly being an underhand tactic, is particularly imperative for this research as it vividly exposes the value that Russia attributes to approval from its significant others, so much so that in this case it was spared any genuine positive compliments as its media outlets were ready to compromise their integrity to fabricate words of praise.

Fiddick (*The Guardian*, 21 July, 1980a, p.11), nevertheless, was more alarmed not about the ideological agenda and technological antics of the Soviets at its service, but rather about the professional integrity of the British TV commentators, who in addition to making improper and unethical remarks, 'with unparalleled alacrity … were not merely countering a wilful distortion but quite deliberately enunciating a contrary ideology'. His inconsolable reaction to such political manipulation of the Games could contain a clue to the dogged persistence of the British government and the broadcasters:

> By all advanced guessing the display Russians planned was going to be spectacular; by common consent after the event, it was. When did a TV network last have live pictures of such a natural spectacle coming straight into the base and decline to use them? We were told it had happened, told it was marvellous, but ourselves allowed a mere glimpse later, in the news.

Fiddick's further remark about the resourcefulness and entrepreneurship of the broadcasters at countering the Soviet scenario and the symbolism of this plot echoes the words of Steele (*The Guardian*, June 21, 1980, p.6) about the cynical nature of the state and the sincerity of the Soviet public regarding the welcome they gave to the Afghan delegation, which will be discussed below. While reminding the public of the propaganda qualities assigned to the

Games by the British state, Fiddick's words simultaneously call into question the real level of freedom in Britain at that time:

> I can't help wondering in what other situation would either network's commentator be permitted to make personal political comments however just the cause, and why is it that this became an exception. Is it not that this time it was the price the TV teams had to pay in order to be there at all? And is that not strictly a political gesture of their own? British public opinion, after all, is by no means united on the matter of our athletes being in Moscow (*The Guardian*, 21 July, 1980a, p.11).

Entrenched ideological enmity in general and political antecedents affecting the Olympics set the broad context for the media framing of the Moscow ceremonies, the principal medium of Soviet communication with the world. Accordingly, the majority of British and US commentators in their reports of the ceremonies could not resist passing judgments on what they saw as the defining and by default negative features of Soviet society and the Soviet state system as a whole. For them, these conspicuously came to the fore during the cultural and artistic part of the ceremonies. For Fiddick (July 21, 1980, p.11) of *The Guardian*, 'the opening ceremony of the Moscow Olympics was never going to be a time for subtleties'; rather it became 'an event unsurpassed for its ideological blatancy'. Frank Keating (August 5, 1980a, p.19), for the same newspaper, echoed these sentiments in his harsh and succinct verdict on the closing ceremony as 'the gruesomely rehearsed spectacular'. His poignant comment almost exactly tallies with his perception about what he saw as the overpowering staged atmosphere of the opening night: 'The dancing was fantastic, the gymnastics elastic, though smiles very plastic….Nothing was spontaneous. Everything was ordered, rehearsed and very, very spectacular' (Keating, *The Guardian*, 1980, August 4, p.1). For Antony Austin (July 23, 1980, p.7) of *The NY Times*, the opening ceremony offered 'a well-organised entertainment and cultural program' yet equally he was 'disappointed by the lack of spontaneity and warmth'. Speaking further on the issue of precision, he maintained that 'the cold efficiency, the strictness of the rules, the militarism [were] taking the gaiety out of [the

ceremony]' (ibid). An unequivocal impression about the opening ceremony of Flora Lewis (July 22, 1980, p.3), also of *The NY Times*, as of a 'monumental display of complete social control' leaves no question that these remarks were certainly aimed at the whole oppressive Soviet system where, from the Western perception, the gigantism of the state projects came first. Human value and individuality came last and genuine emotions should have been rare, subject to the needs of the party and under its strict surveillance.

An embedded characteristic of authoritarianism, stiff precision and impeccable orchestration could be seen in an even more grandiose display 28 years later at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. It is not that China on its part did not try to take a step away from the tradition of 'socialist mass callisthenics' in view of the imminent evolution of the aesthetics of the Olympic ceremonies (Brownell, 2013, p.1321). After the 1984 Los Angeles Games, when China was readmitted to the Olympic fold after 32 years of absence and the whole nation was mesmerised by a 'Hollywood-style' ceremony, 'artistic elements' began finding their way into the national ceremonies. Yet as underlined by Brownell (2013, p.1321), 'despite 25 years of debates, mass callisthenics still constitute the core of the opening ceremonies'.

Luo (2010, p.776) maintains in this respect that 'precision, discipline and harmony seem to be internalised in individuals', whose worldviews are shaped by some type of ideology and, thus, they carry the risk of being distorted due to 'the years of instability, normalisation and modernisation'. This appears to be equally true for Russia. In China's case, Luo details (2010, pp.779-780) what she calls a pathological 'obsession with perfection' by 'an inferiority complex and insecurity, typical of a nation suffering and recovering from a traumatic experience'. Although the callisthenics in Sochi were on a significantly lesser scale, the antecedents listed bear a close resemblance to those of the Sochi Games.

Overall, however, the Western media did not present a united front in its criticism of the Soviets, and there were columnists who expressed honest admiration at the scale and ingenuity of the Moscow ceremonies. Accordingly, Brasher and McIlvanney (July 20, 1980, p.1) of *The Observer*, albeit still placing the event into a political context, thought that Moscow welcomed the world with 'the brilliant opening ceremony for the Games that Jimmy Carter, Margaret Thatcher and several other world leaders tried to kill'. By the same token, the *Chicago Tribune* (August 4, 1980, p.2) in its summary of the closing ceremony hailed it as no less than a 'spectacular' and 'a mighty display' by the Russians.

Despite the occasional positive and enthusiastic or even nonpartisan reports, the disproportioned emphasis was on militarisation and the overbearing staged character of the ceremony. As observed by Arning (2013, p.527), mass orchestration at the Olympic ceremonies in general and military performance in particular 'is an opposite metaphor for SP, which often conceals hegemony under attraction'. Keating (August 4, 1980, p.16) in Moscow sensed in this respect the disheartening iron-handed discipline, the insignificant role of individuals, and what we would now call the desire to flex the 'hard power' muscle in front of the watching world:

> …half of the Russian army marched on, blowing bugles and crashing cymbals, and putting not a foot out of place. The whole shebang was led by a pompous drum major, then everyone followed him out, ridiculously precise great crocodile of flags and symbols, and I suppose people.

The author went on to highlight the ideological nature and prevalent hard power statement of the event with the following observation: 'There were banners everywhere, fluttering yellows and blues and greens, but mostly reds. There were fireworks and cannons that made us innocent mortals cover' (ibid).

Steele (July 28, 1980a, p.6), also of *The Guardian* yet representing a mentioned humble minority, cited a contrasting opinion of Sir Denis Follows, Britain's team commandant, who overall rated the opening ceremony a success: 'As for the military side of it, there was not much there. There is more of a military atmosphere at a Cup Final at Wembley'.

Steele (*The Guardian*, July 21, 1980, p.6) also indicated the perfect synergy of the Soviet coordinating doctrine and fundamental aesthetics, alongside the values and pomp of the Olympics by maintaining that 'it was hard not to feel this weekend that the Olympic ritual was tailor-made for the Soviet Union. It has all the ingredients of pagan religiosity, and heavy sentiment so prevalent here'. Effectively, the columnist sensed that the Moscow Olympics had indeed turned out to be the biggest ritual in what Lane (1981) called 'a highly ritualised society'.

Regarding the 'outlier' status of the Moscow Olympics, columnists from *The Observer* (July 20, 1980, p.1) and *The Guardian* (July 21, 1980, p.6) were further bewildered by another ambiguity in the power and society symbiosis, which will be discussed in detail in chapter 9, in terms of the strategy of spontaneous leadership legitimisation through sport and spectacle resounding today and taking its root from the sports parades and Spartakiads of the 1920 and 1930s. The following words demonstrate the journalists' attitudes to what they saw as the manifestation of the complex and perplexing interplay between the hypocrisy of the state and the patriotism of the people in their warm welcome of the Afghan delegation at the opening ceremony:

> As a political gesture it was a stroke of genius. Was it the spontaneous response of the Soviet public to the Western boycott and a further sign that they support their Government's line? Or was the vast audience in the stands really part of the cast, playing its own role in a cynical piece of stage-management, designed to impress the world? In this society where discipline and imposed discipline often merge

> imperceptibly, the answer will never be clear. What is certain is that the Soviet sporting publics are super patriots (Steele, *The Guardian*, July 21, 1980, p.6).

Newspapers further underlined the political importance of the occasion by mentioning the presence of several leaders from the Socialist camp and the Politburo in full, as well as the opening words of Brezhnev, who 'from the thick concrete walls of a private box high in the stands, rose to make his contribution. He had to press heavily on the arms of his seat to reach a standing position' ('Brezhnev opens the boycott Olympics', *The Observer*, July 20, 1980, p.1). The last remark has obvious allusions to the Soviet state, which although brittle and decrepit inside, still remained heavily guarded by its army and the concrete walls of global ideological self-isolation.

Notwithstanding the political and ideological framing of the Moscow Games, the British and US press did mention several cultural components of the ceremonies, albeit fleetingly. In terms of the most memorable components of the Moscow'80 Ceremonies, the majority of media outlets singled out the pieces of world-famous Soviet classical composers and the music of their comrades written precisely for the occasion. Another particularly noteworthy feature of the ceremonies was the vibrant multicultural make-up of the show. *The Guardian's* Frank Keating (August 4, 1980, p.1) observed that 'There was Shostakovich and Rachmaninov and Artemyev and Pachmutova. There were national dancing and national costumes and national nations'. The 'friendship of nations' magic worked on Jonathan Steele, also of *The Guardian* (July 21, 1980, p.6), who surprisingly got to the root of this symbolic sign and further elaborated on this issue of the Soviets' peculiar ethnic diversity, highlighting a notable contrast with the US:

> As a reminder of an important aspect of the Soviet Union which is usually ignored in the West, there was a whirling bust of folk-dancing from the many nations which form this country. The United States is a melting-pot in which a homogeneous mass culture

> has already largely eroded ethnic variety, but Soviet power and ideological uniformity have not yet had this same effect.

The Soviets' innovative approach to mass calisthenics as well as 'the brilliant union of the gymnastics and ballet- in which the Russians are supreme' (ibid) also caught commentators' attention in Britain. By the same token, newspapers paid tribute to the appearance of Soviet spacemen in the middle of the ceremony on a computerised scoreboard with an appeal to universal peace (*The Observer*, July 20, 1980, p.1). Apart from reiterating 'with a touch of extravaganza' (*The Guardian*, July 21, 1980, p.6) the preeminent message of the Soviet Olympics, this section of the show demonstrated Soviet excellence in terms of state-of-the-art technology and its knowledge and leadership in the identity-defining space exploration programme.

At the same time, Fiddick (July 21, 1980a, p.11) of *The Guardian* reminded his readers that one of the most symbolic elements of the opening ceremony and what Arning saw as one of the most prominent iconic signs, the procession with the doves, was envisaged to persuasively bring home the message of the Soviets spearheading the cause of peace. This is due to its 'particular form of ceremonial march', which instead 'would have the effect of sending echoes of the 1936 Olympics positively clanging across the years' (ibid).

As previously established, through hosting the Moscow Olympics the Soviet state attempted to address both domestic and international audiences, and do so under the extraordinary and unfavourable circumstances of the boycott. *The NY Times* columnists had their own opinions regarding the nature and effectiveness of these SP efforts. With the West doing its utmost to send a message 'over the heads of the Kremlin to the Soviet people that …. people outside their borders don't trust Moscow's ''peaceful'' intentions', Lewis (July 22, 1980, p.3) argued in this respect that inside the country the Olympics were supposed to offset the main effect of

the boycott. She went on to conclude that, indeed, 'The Soviets have shown their power to mobilise, organise, dominate their people's understanding of the world through these Olympics' (ibid). Austin (August 4, 1980a, p.1), in his turn, in the summary of the closing ceremony contended that despite its best effort Moscow was deprived of a two-week status of 'the capital of mankind'. As a result, it seems that the mission of the West was successfully accomplished as, according to his verdict, the Soviet leaders did not reach their ultimate goal 'of casting the 1980 Olympics as an occasion marking full international acceptance of the Soviet Government as a world leader equal to, if not more equal than, the United States' (ibid).

8.3 Ceremonies of the Moscow Olympics in the Soviet Press

In view of the controversial status of the Games, the aggressor image of the host and the extensive boycott, the Soviets acutely needed to construct an aura of historical legitimacy around them through which they could send a set of effective counter messages. As a result, reporting on the opening ceremony, *Izvestiia* ('Grand opening of the XXII Summer Olympic Games in Moscow', July 20, 1980, p.1) emphasised the dramatic allusions to the Greek origins of the Games, pointing out that 'This theatrical performance symbolises continuity of bright Olympic ideals, which throughout the centuries served peace, friendship and understanding'. The pronounced Hellenic part of the ceremony, representing an iconic sign and consequently lending itself to a straightforward interpretation, not only suggests the Soviets' compliance with the noble Olympic traditions and values, but importantly appears to indicate that it is Greece that was the 'cradle of Western civilisation', not the boycotters who allegedly championed civilised values. Accordingly, further developing on this sentiment to signal the approval and support of the 'civilised world', *Pravda* (July 20, 1980, p.1) argued that 'a colourful parade of delegations – is a clear demonstration of a wide representation of

nations at the Moscow Olympics'. To showcase the Soviets' commitment to multiculturalism and peaceful coexistence with different political orders, *Pravda* contended that the honourable Olympic ideals endorsed and safeguarded by the Soviet state brought together 'envoys of different nations, representatives of the varying political views and convictions, religions and ethnicities' (ibid). To further underline the message of peace, *Izvestiia* ('Grand opening of the XXII Summer Olympic Games in Moscow', July 20, 1980, p.1) marvelled at the sight of the Olympic pure white banner going up to the skies 'followed by the twenty two white doves competing with it in their whiteness'. To make the message even more intense and enduring, the lighting up of the Olympic flame – another iconic sign - was, likewise, followed by thousands of doves shooting upwards into the skies to the composition 'Ode to Sport' by Russian composer Artemyev, which was written for the occasion.

To give the Moscow Olympics a 'personal touch' and demonstrate the 'cultural achievements' (*Pravda*, July 20, 1980, p.1) of the nation, there were numerous musical and artistic pieces with particular symbolic subtexts for the Soviet people. Yet they were lacking in exact historical attachments and were still easily comprehensible to the foreign audiences. There was a place for folk melodies such as '*Kalinka*' and the patriotic war song '*Katyusha*', both stereotypical emblems of Russia in the West; there was 'A Song about Motherland' and several catchy pop melodies by Pakhmutova and Dobronravov. These were also written precisely for the occasion and, over the course of time, they turned into a treasured Olympic legacy in their own right. An example of such multi-layering of meanings can be found in a dance to the music from the iconic Soviet film 'Walking the Streets of Moscow', a masterpiece that in a way became the quintessence of the Thaw, a period in Soviet history when repressions and censorship were relaxed. A good illustration of a symbolic sign, it struck an emotional chord with the locals whilst simultaneously being an unambiguous

invitation ‘to the thousands of athletes and guests to walk around Moscow, enjoy its historical sites and new sports arenas, which contribute to the harmonious appearance of the city’ (ibid)

Similar to their British colleagues, the commentators mentioned the appearance of the spacemen with ‘the warm welcome to the Olympians’ and Moscow’s sentimental mascot, Misha. Paying much more attention to the cultural programme of the ceremony than the foreign press, however, and in a qualitatively different tone, *Izvestiia* (‘Grand opening of the XXII Summer Olympic Games in Moscow’, July 20, 1980, p.1) admired ‘the colourful columns of athletes forming impressive compositions’. In this case, these were a legacy from the *fizkultura* parades of the 1930s. They celebrated the ‘dancing whirlwind sweeping across the arena, enticing the audience to join in – such is the contagious power of the youth dance from the folk suite ‘Friendship of Nations’’ (ibid). Availing themselves of an unquestionable asset of the Soviet Union, namely an ethnically diverse yet inclusive society, the directors of the ceremony masterfully attempted to persuade the global audiences about the peaceful designs and aspirations of the host. The ‘Friendship of Nations’ dance, being a symbol with iconic content, or what Arning called ‘mere folkloric furniture for an international audience but a source of pride for [the host] culture’ (2013, p.525), however, left no questions as to who was first amongst the ‘friends’:

> A firework of the dances of our country. Inflammatory rhythms of their melodies. The best professional and amateur bands demonstrate their art in front of the one hundred thousand people. The composition is finished by the Russian dance, performed by all bands (*Izvestiia*, ‘Grand opening of the XXII Summer Olympic Games in Moscow’, July 20, 1980, p.1).

In the spirit of Olympism, the Soviets were eager to show that talent had no ethnic, religious, or other boundaries in their society. Accordingly, in a demonstration of ‘the blossoming of multinational art’ (*Pravda*, July 20, 1980, p.1) in Soviet high culture, ‘The beginning of the Opening Ceremony of the Games was heralded by the festive overture by an outstanding

Soviet composer Dmitrii Shostakovich. This overture – [was] a musical emblem of the Moscow Olympics' (*Izvestiia*, July 20, 1980, p.1). At the same time, for example in Tallinn where several Olympic events took place, the opening ceremony was marked by the premiere of the 'Ode to the Flame' by the local Estonian composer Uno Nayssoo.

Izvestiia (July 20, 1980, p.1) also applauded the performance given by the students of the sports universities. The so-called *Zarjadka* 'conquered the audience by harmony, refinement and inventiveness' and was the 'epitome of grace, poetry and youth' (ibid). It was a demonstration of the Soviets' innovative approach to mass participation in physical activity, *fizkultura*, in which the Soviets took great pride and which formed a marked contrast to the elitist status of sport in the West. *Pravda's* (July 20, 1980, p.1) eloquent comments on that matter are almost a direct citation from its reports about the *fizkultura* parades of the 1930s:

> The [students'] performances emphatically proved that physical education and sport in our country – are constituent parts of an education system and socialisation of a person, who harmoniously possesses spiritual wealth, moral purity and physical perfection. These are the definitive features of sports movement in the USSR: *massovost'*, the recreational orientation of all sports activities and *masterstvo* of athletes.

Although these performances set the precedent of the artistic use of mass calisthenics during the Olympic ceremonies, widely adopted by future hosts, it was precisely this part of the show that made the foreign press decry the 'gruesome orchestration' and the 'monumental display of complete social control' at the show. Arning (2013, p.527) gives an insightful analysis of the issue:

> Moscow was the seminal Olympics that inaugurated the code of orchestration. It is likely that this was building upon the calisthenics of the Soviet tradition. [….] This very Soviet mechanisation through rhythmic regimentation was part of the Soviet ideal of voiding the nuance of human emotion, promoting robot like beings incorporated into proletarian units.

Regarding the Moscow'80 Games, given the irreconcilable ideologies and uncompromising positions, there is no doubt that the Western press aimed at one of the Soviets' most ambitious and fundamental projects: the creation of an ideal Soviet man. The home Olympics were the ideal opportunity to proudly showcase him. It was, however, the 1936 Nazi Olympics that, drawing for the most part on the aesthetics of the Turnen movement, first exploited the theme of youth, military band performances, and the 'mathematical exactitude' (Montague, *The Guardian*, August 2, 2012) of the ceremony ritual for unambiguously political purposes. The first ingenious affair of its kind aimed to legitimise a controversial regime globally through a festival of sport, the Berlin Olympic Opening Ceremony; it carried this out on a gargantuan scale. As a result, 'the new Caesar of this era, the German Fuehrer', appeared to a rousing and exalting act of 'an orchestra, reinforced by the drums and bugles of a half-dozen military bands, …[and] a choir of a thousand, all in white' (Birchall F.T, *The NY Times*, August1, 1936). 'The longest ritual that has ever heralded the opening of these Games' (Montague, *The Guardian*, August 2, 2012), the ceremony was directed by the infamous Carl Diem, as 'a pageant in five acts on the romantic theme of youth' (Birchall F.T, *The NY Times*, August1, 1936). The sheer magnitude of the night was psychedelic with as many as 20,000 performers, most of them children: a traditional symbol of peace. Inviting suggestive analogies with the more recent Games, structurally more so with the Moscow'80 and the 2008 Beijing Olympics, 'five hundred … girls from a noted gymnastics school … gave a demonstration of rhythmic dancing'. This represents a deceitful reference to the familiar 'Friendship of Nations', a true German rendition of which was to become known before long; it also obtained its place in the show with 'groups of boys from various nations engaging in games about a series of bonfires' (ibid). The ceremony ended with 'a sword dance …in which both dancers died in rhythmic agony', a mythical allegory, striking in its accuracy of a self-

fulfilling prophesy. The paradox is that the straightforward 'morals of this scene …that modern war destroys both the victor and the vanquished one's' (ibid), whilst so apparent to *The NY Times* columnist, were gruesomely lost on the host nation. At the time, however, there could not have been a better camouflage for the Hitler's genuine intentions, with the international publics mostly taking the bait:

> These Olympic Games have had an opening notable even beyond expectations, high as these were. They seem likely to accomplish what the rulers of Germany have frankly desired from them, that is, to give the world a new viewpoint from which to regard the Third Reich: It is promising that this viewpoint will be taken from an Olympic hill of peace (ibid).

Soviet newspapers, likewise, distinguished the role played by children at the opening ceremony and the festive atmosphere that they created. Clad as an Olympic mascot, Misha, they also took part in *Zarjadka*. Mishas were followed by young girls, who with 'an unsurpassed mastery' performed acrobatic scenes (*Pravda*, July 20, 1980, p.1). The universal allegorical meaning of children is one of a bright happy future and of innocence. Taking into account the significance of the context, there could not have been a better metaphor to offset the 'empire of evil' image of the Soviet Union, which was being formed in the West at that time. Whilst the Soviet directors must have invested children with the symbolism of peace and purity, the mere fact that they represented the army collectives could not have been lost on the sceptical Western journalists. Yet flirting with the world on its debutante ball, Moscow, for its part, wished to leave none of its assets in the shadows. As a result, commenting on the gymnastics and acrobatic performances – disciplines where the Soviets deservedly reigned supreme - the *Izvestiia* columnist (July 20, 1980, p.1) emotionally noted that 'during the Olympics sport and art have organically enriched each other'.

A departure from high classical art and Soviet social realism, as a tribute to the Russian folk tradition and the exploitation of several lingering stereotypes, became a surprise in the closing ceremony:

> On top of the mighty trucks *Matryoshkas* enter the stadium, each the size of the many-storied building. The Russian national festivity begins – marry, full of life and resourcefulness. The *garmoshkas* play and the guys dance. The girls sail past, hovering a yoke, they do a national round dance. Slender as the birch trees they are. And there is a birch grove rising up against the artistic background. A moment – and white swans sail over the tribune-screen ('Great success of the Olympics. Grand closing of the XXII Summer Olympic Games in Moscow', *Izvestiia*, August 4, 1980, p.1.).

In a markedly different tone than that of the British press, the Soviet journalists in their analyses of the closing ceremony also spoke of the Moscow military band, which 'shone not only through the high musical culture, but through the military bearing, having masterfully done complex march re-formations' (*Pravda*, 'In the name of peace, in the glory of sport', August 4, 1980, p.1).

Despite the presence of the military during the cultural programme, which particularly unnerved the West, in the summary of the closing ceremony *Pravda's* (ibid) commentators declared that 'the XXII Olympic Games made its contribution to the strengthening of understanding, friendship and trust among nations – that is their main achievement'. Bearing in mind the significance of approval from the international community for the Soviet psyche as well as the importance Soviet leadership placed on the Olympics as the main vehicle to positively augment the image of the state in the world, to further persuade the local readership of the success of the Games the reports of the closing ceremony focused not so much on the artistic programme, but rather on the praises made by participants towards the host.

The Soviet newspapers ended their analyses of the closing night by focusing on the tearful Misha, the mascot, which flew into the skies with the final words of the Games in the

background. This instantly turned the moment into the most sentimental and memorable point in the whole Games and made it into a symbolic sign for years and generations of Russian people to come: 'Moscow wishes you the peaceful skies over your home' ('In the name of peace, in the glory of sport', *Pravda*, August 4, 1980, p.1).

8.4 Interpreting the Messages of the Sochi Olympics Opening Ceremony in the British and US press

In notable contrast to the Moscow'80 Olympics, reviews of the opening ceremony of the Sochi 2014 Olympics regarding its artistic side were either mild or positive. Thus, it was considered to be 'a spectacular display' (*The Independent*, February 7, 2014), 'enjoyable' (*Huffington Post*, February 7, 2014), 'pulse-raising' (*The Boston Globe*, February 7, 2014), 'a stunning and delightful success' (*USA Today*, February 7, 2014), and 'a fanfare for reinvented Russia' (*The NY Times*, February 7, 2014).

Yet several columnists found the 'relatively simple metaphors' (Konstantin Ernst cited by *Daily Mail*, February 8, 2014) too intricate and locally grounded for a foreigner to comprehend. Rice (February 7, 2014) of *The Independent* thought that several elements in the ceremony were 'utterly confusing' and served as 'a reminder that these curtain raisers are rather daft unless you can fathom what is going on'. Poniewozik (February 8, 2014) of *Time* likewise opined that 'watching the Sochi Olympics opening ceremony could at times feel like going to the party of someone you barely knew'. Mary Dejevsky (February 13, 2014) of *The Guardian* noted that 'international coverage missed the point of the Sochi opening ceremony'; *The Atlantic* (February 7, 2014) speculated that the North Americans would 'have some questions' about it.

Even if there was no question that for Russia, in the established traditions of such spectacles, the opening ceremony would become 'a national manifesto, a reflection of how a nation sees

itself, and where it is going' (Harris-Quinney, *The Commentator*, 30 July, 2012), its exact face and the attendant philosophy it was going to unveil to the world remained rather nebulous and mired in speculations. All the same, two points were initially clear: the ceremony would theatrically inaugurate a vision of the new Russia, collated in the mind of Vladimir Putin. Whilst indeed this was the case, the Western press grappled with its symbolism and skimmed only the surface of the panoply of meanings and messages. *The Telegraph* (February 7, 2014), for example, concluded that it was Putin's 'introduction of the new Russia to the world'; however, this left the principle attributes of this 'newness' as unspecified. The newspapers echoed each other regarding the exceptional role of Putin and the trivial intents of the ceremony; they almost in unison reflected on 'sheer pageantry and national pride, with all of the homespun promotionalism, mythmaking and self-aggrandizement' (*The NY Times*, February 7, 2014). These characteristics as a rule are commonplace for such occasions and are passed down to every following event. For *Time* (February 7, 2014), it was 'Vladimir Putin's show' designed to 'cast [the host country] in an optimistic light'. Chadband (February 7, 2014) of *The Telegraph* thought that the show 'was Putin's vision of his Russia, connected by its majestic past to an exciting future'. *CBS News* (February 7, 2014) likewise labelled the ceremony 'a crowning achievement of Vladimir Putin's Russia', which became 'a celebration of its past greatness and hopes for future glory'. For Cotton (February 7, 2014) of *The Times*, the ceremony triumphantly announced 'Putin's version' of Russia: 'a country with a rich and complex history emerging confidently from a rocky two decades'. *The NY Times* (February 7, 2014) succinctly reasoned that 'the message of the over-the-top ceremony was simply this: In a big way, Russia is back'. It went on to argue that being the 'personal ambition of President Vladimir Putin', the Games and the

ceremony accordingly 'illustrate the nation's rise from post-Soviet chaos under his leadership' (ibid).

Unlike the Moscow Olympics opening ceremony, which was simply a grandiose pageant in the established traditions of the early Soviet *fizkultura* parades and Spartakiads, the Sochi ceremony, entitled 'Dreams about Russia', portrayed the journey of an 11-year-old girl named Lyubov 'across centuries, as well as Russia's roughly 4,400-mile expanse, across nine time zones, from Europe to the Pacific Ocean, and from the Arctic Sea to the Black Sea' (*The NY Times*, February 7, 2014). During the trip through Russian history, the ceremony celebrated outstanding literary, musical, and scientific achievements from each period. By reaching deep 'into the repertory of classical music and ballet' (ibid), Russia relied on its tried-and-tested SP trump card, namely high culture:

> The music included pieces by Alexander Borodin, Georgy Sviridov, Stravinsky and Tchaikovsky, with selections from "Swan Lake" and "The Nutcracker." There were roles for the opera soprano Anna Netrebko; the prima ballerina Diana Vishneva; and Russia's best-known conductor, Valery Gergiev of the Mariinsky Theater.
>
> The ceremony also showcased Russian ballet, with performances not just by Ms. Vishneva, the star soloist with the Mariinsky Ballet, but also by Svetlana Zakharova, a principal dancer with the Bolshoi Ballet; Ivan Vasiliev, now with American Ballet Theater; and other stars. In one sketch, the dancers brought to life a ballroom scene from Tolstoy's "War and Peace," and Mr. Vasiliev drew gasps with his signature gravity-defying leaps.

The Times (February 7, 2014) also singled out Stravinsky's The Rite of Spring, 'arguably the single most influential musical composition of the 20th century', and Tchaikovsky's music, which it found an interesting choice first and foremost because 'he was gay [although that's not universally acknowledged in Russia]'. In conspicuous contrast to the Moscow'80 Ceremonies, which also showcased classical music and ballet, the emphasis this time was not only on the artistic masterpieces but was equally placed on the superstar performers. The producer of the show, Konstantin Ernst, was explicit in stating that the choice of classics was

in a way a matter of exigency, because ‘we cannot, like London, boast of a great number of world-famous pop performers' (Herszenhorn, *The NY Times*, February 7, 2014). This observation, by indicating the London Olympics as a reference point, ostensibly further proves the role of the West as Russia’s significant other. Regarding Ernst’s penchant for classics, the director also noted ‘that the goal was to introduce the world to Russia and its history through storytelling that balanced the “simple and straightforward” and “the artistic and metaphorical” (Stuever, *The Washington Post*, February 8, 2014). As Lally and Englund (February 7, 2014) of *The Washington Post* noted in this respect, ‘if London was pop, Sochi would be poetry — in motion’. Ernst, likewise, went on to speak about the concept of spectacle, which broadly should have been showing the civilised side of Russia, and thus taking the foreign audiences off the beaten track of banal clichés, whilst presumably also evoking pride and a sense of unity amongst the locals:

> I wanted to break the stereotype of our country. What is Russia for an average person of this world? It is caviar and *matryoshka* dolls, balalaika or *ushanka* hats, or even just a bear. These things are all part of us but they are not the whole of us (Ernst cited by Chadband, *The Telegraph*, February, 7, 2014).

Chadband (ibid) appropriately raised a question in this regard, asking whether the proverbial ‘War and Peace and Swan Lake and the Russian Revolution’ were indeed a step away from stereotypes, and immediately surmised that ‘the scenes were carried out with such élan and so differently, featuring some of Russia’s greatest dance and musical artists, that they did feel completely original’. Defying stereotypes, Ernst, nevertheless, succeeded in immersing the audience into the imaginary invented Russia, which drove Poniewozik (February 8, 2014) of *Time* to suggest that ‘this ceremony was so thoroughly Russian you could keep it in your freezer and pour shots of it’.

Apart from Tolstoy with the ball scenes from his *War and Peace*, the writers mentioned in the ceremony were Pushkin, Dostoyevsky, and the émigré writer Nabokov with his controversial novel *Lolita*. Nabokov's book is about a relationship between a middle-aged professor and an underage girl, which represented a tongue-in-cheek choice considering the current Russian laws against sexual propaganda among minors. The second most popular playwright in the world after Shakespeare, Chekhov, was also mentioned. The ceremony ended with the particularly enduring image of 'the glowing white troika, the chariot drawn by three horses immortalised in Gogol's novel "Dead Souls'' (Herszenhorn, *The NY Times*, February 7, 2014). As a Ukrainian-born writer who wrote in Russian, Gogol is a powerful source of cultural SP and, as a result, his writing brings about innumerable bones of contention between Russia and Ukraine, particularly in the tumultuous aftermath of the Sochi Games. This time, the image of the *troika* drew a strong allegorical conclusion, which, however, was easily deciphered by the Western journalists, of an eventful and controversial Russian history as portrayed in the show, where the only constant was Russia: persevering through the night and, like a Phoenix, each time rising from the ashes. As Lally and Englund (February 7, 2014) for *The Washington Post* precisely observed, 'Gogol had burned the *troika* into every Russian heart in "Dead Souls," comparing it to their nation: 'The roaring air is torn to pieces and becomes wind; all things on earth fly by and other nations and states gaze askance as they step aside and give her the right of way'.

Predictably, a section of the ceremony was dedicated to Peter the Great, 'an architect of modern European Russia' (*The Times*, February 7, 2014) and a great westerniser. He was the first person to realise an unyielding Russian dream of being a great power and he created the archetypal 'cradle' of Russian SP: 'the coastal St. Petersburg, a then brand-new city built on a swamp. St. Petersburg is still a well-known cultural focal point in the country' (*The Atlantic*,

February 7, 2014). A tribute to him was also amongst the most confusing moments for a foreign eye, with the commentators mistaking Peter's soldiers for 'the guys dressed like pirates' (*The Independent*, February 7, 2014), or worse still, misinterpreting the whole performance for the enactment of the scenes from the Pirates of the Caribbean.

The introduction to the 20th century started with images of the revolution, an event still considered by many Russians to be the greatest achievement of the century, and avant-garde art, considered by many in the world to be one of the greatest Russian contributions to the century. These two topics were shown in a type of perplexing symbiosis. As Konstantin Ernst explained, 'they are very close, they go hand in hand. In fact, avant-garde art predicted the revolution in a way, and the revolution killed avant-garde art' (cited in *The Washington Post*, February 7, 2014). The impetuous inevitability of the historic cataclysm 'was portrayed as a gathering snow storm over the sumptuous imperial waltz of tsarism broken through by a locomotive glowing red as it screamed into the stadium' (Ioffe, *New Republic*, February 8, 2014). The revolution in technology and the transition from revolutionary idealism to dehumanising drudgery, alongside the excesses of industrialisation, were metaphorically represented by juxtaposing the workers against the giant machinery that shortly reduced them to nothing but 'mechanical cogs and gears' (*The New York Times*, February 7, 2014). For some, this represented a very telling metaphor of the individual's place within the Soviet system. Perhaps the only symbols directly associated with the rule of Stalin in the ceremony were the famous Moscow skyscrapers and 'the worker — disembodied hand carrying his hammer — and peasant woman — disembodied hand holding a scythe — built for the Soviet pavilion at the 1937 International Exhibition in Paris' (Lally and Englund, *The Washington Post*, February 7, 2014), or as *The Times* (February 7, 2014) commentator put it, the 'menacingly swinging sickle and images of Moscow's Gothamesque 'Seven Sisters'

skyscrapers'. Vera I. Mukhina's sculpture 'Worker and Peasant Woman', which appears to have been used in the ceremony to emphasise both the proletarian and peasant ideal of the late Soviet Union and as a symbol of the defiance of individualism, like the skyscrapers survived the post-Soviet transition, and is an unfailing symbol of Mosfilm, Russia's leading film studio.

Commentators from the start hypothesised that the ceremony was a metaphorical moment of enacting a new Russian identity, which essentially should have involved making a difference with itself, namely by primarily relinquishing its troubling totalitarian past. The journalists, as a result, were fixated on how Russia had come to terms with its communist period, or disturbingly for some, rather still refused to do so. Thus, whilst *The Atlantic* (February 7, 2014) simply admitted that the positive narrative 'kept a light touch on virtually all of the more troubling moments in Russia's history', Herszenhorn (February 7, 2014) of *The NY Times* was truly upset that 'the re-narration of history in the opening ceremony occasionally involved some breezing past inconvenient episodes — the Stalinist purges that killed millions, for instance, and the gulags that imprisoned and killed millions more'. Similarly, if *The Independent* (February 7, 2014) suggested that 'the choreographer touched on Russia's difficult history in what appeared a sensitive and clever way', Poniewozik (February 8, 2014) of *Time* acerbically quipped that '[the] version of Russian history, especially in the 20th century, was so smoothed over you could skate on it'. He went on to criticise the woeful deliberate cynicism of the directors, who:

> skipped over the bloody excesses of Stalinist Russia in favor of a bit of World War II and a whole lot of Soviet '50s teenyboppers. The turbulent recent history, perestroika, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia's lurches toward and away from democracy, were summed up by a girl letting go of a red balloon.

Mirroring the previous attitude, Dejevsky (February 13, 2014) of *The Guardian* was appalled that 'the time allotted to the building and flourishing of St Petersburg was almost as much as that reserved for the blood, guts and 1950s-style security of the defunct Soviet Union'.

The clue as to why the occasion was spared any fully-fledged public penitence could lie in the fact that, for Russia and for Putin in particular, the communist legacy causes significantly less uneasiness than that felt in the West. The conspicuous absence of atonement, self-flagellation, and condemnation of the dark crimes of the previous epochs, which would have been a sight for sore eyes in the West, was explained by Ernst, the creative director of the ceremony. In the Russia unveiled that night, 'the emphasis was on achievement' (*The Washington Post*, February 7, 2014). Such alleged pragmatism, which should have struck a note in the West, made 'Mr. Ernst design a show that, like Mr. Putin, was not shy about embracing certain aspects of the Soviet past' and its unquestionable triumphs like 'industrialism and the avant-garde' (Herszenhorn, *The NY Times*, February 7, 2014).

Despite the anxiety about the selectiveness of the narrative, there was no consensus amongst the commentators as to the exact feelings and attitudes of the ceremony towards the Soviet period. As a result, Lally and Englund (February 7, 2014) of *The Washington Post* thought that it offered 'an unflinching look at the Soviet system, absent of nostalgia or shame, viewed through the artistic vision of one of its victims'. For Stuever (February 8, 2014), also of *The Washington Post*, on the contrary, there was an aura of romanticising or what 'turns out to be some Vladimir Putin-approved nostalgia for the look and feel of the Stalin era'.

However, the *Daily Mail's* (February 8, 2014) remark that 'some of the decades of Soviet brutality were depicted almost with nostalgia as 1960s cars zoomed around the stadium floor to the sound of the Soviet pop hit ''I Am Glad, Because I'm Finally Back Home'' is

inaccurate for the most part. The nostalgic feel characterised rather a post-Stalinist period of breakthroughs in space exploration, great optimism, the growth of social welfare and comparative freedom, particularly what regards art. Known as the 'Thaw', it featured in the Soviet Summer Olympics opening ceremony and this time was illustrated with the scenes from 'Austin Powers style 1960s Moscow' (*The Times*, February 7, 2014). A peculiar place of the decade in the Russian psyche was acknowledged by Lally and Englund (February 7, 2014) for *The Washington Post*:

> Then came the 1960s, a period remembered fondly by many adult Russians today. Men triumphantly carried red jets, then white rockets. The name of Yuri Gagarin, the first man in space, illuminated the floor. Buildings rose; old Soviet cars drove down the middle of the stage. A frenzied but cheerful dance progressed from students to hipsters to lovers to weddings to children.

The sentimental attachment of the Russians to that period of chimerical freedom and the short-lived loosening of the grip of the iron hand, alongside the complete omission of the 1990s in the ceremony, which was a decade of absolute liberties, indefinite opportunities, unrestricted individualism and rampant capitalism, subconsciously invite inferences. Ioffe (February 8, 2014) of *New Republic* maintained that the whole pageant was first and foremost 'a deft way of glossing over the turbulence of the painful, post-Soviet period, one that has produced very little of the kind of art and music and national treasure that Russia can flaunt before the world'. Moreover, it seems like the show discreetly endorsed one of the basic ideas behind Putin's legitimacy: Russians are capable of great achievements under wise and caring guidance and should by no means be left to the violent forces of uncertainty.

According to Herszenhorn (February 7, 2014) of *The NY Times*, the overarching message contained in the portrayal of the Soviet period and 'clearly shared by Mr. Putin, [was] that [the Soviet Union's] sheer bigness — especially its unification of Russia's multitude of ethnicities — should be admired'. This view, indeed, is among the principles of the Russian

SP concept and the Russian world project; the same time, it is a fascinating reference to and a symbolic echoing of one of the central ideas of the Moscow'80 Olympics. A notable contrast to the Moscow Olympics, though, which particularly dismayed Ioffe (February 8, 2014) of *New Republic*, was the 'glaring omission throughout the parade of Russian culture [of] any pretence of cultural diversity'. If the opening ceremony is among the most influential vehicles of SP promotion, then Russia failed to emphatically bring home one of its arguably basic values:

> The announcers importantly declared how big Russia is—"the biggest country in the world, as big as the ocean"—and that it contains multitudes, "180 nations, each with their own culture and language," but we saw only one of them: the ethnic Russians. The world saw only traditional Slavic garb, with its lush brocade and big head pieces (*kokoshniki*), but nothing of the *lezginka*, the dance of the North Caucasus, or, say, the throat singing of Tuva. Putin is, after all, a Soviet man, and in the Soviet Union, the Russians were the first among the brothers of all the Soviet nations (Ioffe, New Republic, February 8, 2014).

If the 'Friendship of Nations' became a far cry from the Soviet Olympics, space, warranting its role as an inalienable and timeless part of the national idea in Russia, was one of the few themes that migrated from the Moscow'80 Ceremonies into the Fisht stadium. Firstly, it became evident during the parade of delegations, when 'each country's athletes entered from the centre of the stadium, surrounded by a satellite image of their country as seen from space' (*The Atlantic*, February 7, 2014). As the ceremony progressed, there were visually arresting scenes of the star-lit skies, the previously mentioned alphabetic references to the Russian contribution to the space conquest, and finally, the Russian flag being proudly carried by a group of cosmonauts, including Fyodor Yurchikhin, who took the Olympic flame to space as part of the torch relay. Valentina Tereshkova, the first woman in space, was among the bearers of the Olympic flag. Space was likewise honoured in the original opening of the ceremony during a parade of Russian historical figures and achievements in Cyrillic alphabetical order, which Mary Dejevsky (February 13, 2014) of *The Guardian* saw as 'no

less than an attempt to devise a new, post-Soviet cultural canon'. Her contemplations on the choice of Soviet symbols for some letters are as follows:

> S, you will be relieved to know, was for Sputnik, not Stalin, one of several references to the glory days of Soviet space conquests: G for Gagarin; L for moon robot *lunokhod*; T for the rocket scientist, Tsiolkovsky.
>
> Shchusev, the architect who designed Moscow's wedding-cake skyscrapers for Stalin, was also honoured, while Z stood for the Russian for combine harvester. But there was no mention of communism, or Lenin, or any other Soviet-era leader. P stood for the periodic table – a reference to the Russian scientist Mendeleev and, in effect, a renewed repudiation of the Stalin-era pseudoscience of Lysenko (ibid).

Remarkably, in the ceremony that Chadband (February 7, 2014) of *The Telegraph* saw as an 'ostentatious, controversy-packed show of strength', in stark contrast to the Moscow'80 Ceremonies the only explicit allusion to hard power was 'the celebration of military prowess of Peter the Great' (*The NY Times*, February 7, 2014), as well as an entirely humourous and placatory take on hard power: 'the Russian Police Choir that arguably stole the show with a surprisingly rousing rendition of Daft Punk's dance floor anthem 'Get Lucky'' (*Daily Mail*, February 8, 2014). In general, for Dejevsky (February 13, 2014) of *The Guardian*, the ceremony above anything else caught attention through an 'encouraging lack of dogma and militarism', which was so typical of the Moscow'80 Games.

Instead of military swaggering or flexing muscles, the ceremony introduced the unfamiliar traits of Russia, and accordingly the possible sources of its SP. An unorthodox idea replete with elusive symbolism and concealed controversy was conveyed in a performance of the Russian anthem by 'the choir of the Sretensky Monastery, founded more than 600 years ago to celebrate Moscow's escape from invasion by Tamerlane' (Lally and Englund, *The Washington Post*, February 7, 2014). A symbol of Soviet rule, where 'the lines "the great Lenin" [were] replaced by references to "Russia — our sacred homeland" and "wide spaces, for dreams and for living'' (*The NY Times*, February 7, 2014), it was thus performed by an

institution suppressed and stigmatized in the USSR. Such a move, by design or by default, intensified the effect of the substitution of the communist ideology with what appeared to be civic patriotism, and focused the attention on Orthodox Christianity, which was proclaimed as one of the spiritual foundations of modern Russia. Turning into one of the most visually memorable scenes in the ceremony, Christian tradition featured unobtrusively once more when the 'dancing Orthodox spires' (Stuever, *The Washington Post*, February 8, 2014) and 'the multicolour onion domes of St. Basil's Cathedral bobbled in the air' (*The NY Times*, February 7, 2014).

Overall, the Moscow'80 Olympics was an important symbolic touchstone for the Sochi 2014 Games and 'the ceremony was, in many respects, the introduction to the world of a re-created Russia, one far different from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics that hosted the Summer Games in Moscow in 1980' (ibid). The newspaper's assumption that 'in many ways the Sochi Olympics have been designed to supplant memories of that time' might, however, be inaccurate. Whereas the Moscow'80 Games were an important marker and a conspicuous validation of the coherent Soviet identity, the Sochi Olympics as 'an ultimate achievement of Vladimir Putin's Russia' (*Daily Mail*, February 8, 2014) are indeed a rather pretentious appeal for 'global vindication' (*The Boston Globe*, February 7, 2014). Yet, they represent a timid attempt to lay the grounds for, and map out the future of, Russian identity. Despite the fact that many facets of Soviet identity have followed the socialist state into obscurity, memories of the Moscow Olympics persevere and are successfully exploited as a revered uncontested footing for an emerging Russian identity, as well as being a crucial indicator of the continuity of the Russian state. This unfinished internal affair and the pre-eminence of local audiences might explain why the majority of the symbols in the ceremony, being symbolic signs, remained misunderstood by global spectators. Poniewozik (February 7, 2014) of *Time* noted

in this respect that, 'The ceremony, in a way like this whole Olympics, felt like a story Russia was telling the world, but most of all a story it was telling itself, about a vital, proud, storied country on the rise'. *The CBS News* (February 7, 2014) columnist's following explanation of the psychological significance of the Sochi Olympics for the Russian people also contains hints as to why Russia was rummaging through history for inviolable national reference points and was unable to let go of memories of its glory days under communism:

> These games are particularly important, as many Russians are still insecure about their place in the world after the end of the Cold War and the years since that have seen the dominance of the United States and China. Perhaps cuing on those feelings, it didn't take long for the classic Russian pride to come shining through at the opening ceremony.

The NY Times (February 7, 2014) journalist, consequently, diagnosed that 'if there were any traces of national self-consciousness lingering nearly a quarter-century after the collapse of communism and the loss of superpower status, they were put aside for the evening'. This inevitably invites comparisons with the 2008 Beijing Games, which according to Luo (2010, p.779), epitomised China's 'dream of becoming able-bodied and powerful'. Strikingly similar to Sochi's case, '[t]he ceremonies were viewed as if they were a curative cult, helping China to live with its past, to remember, forget and forgive the experiences of the Hundred Year of Humiliation' (ibid). The notable difference lies only in the fact that, whilst for China the ceremonies and the Games became 'efficacious' due to 'the presence of former attackers now returning as guests to celebrate together this extravagant carnival' (ibid), Russia exulted itself because of the attendance of its former ideological opponents, who at the same time never ceased to be its important others. At the time of the Games, they were even more indispensable in terms of validating Russia's emerging identity.

The releasing of the red balloon at the end of the show invites parallels with the final moments of the Moscow'80 closing ceremony; however, last time it was a sentimental

farewell to Misha, the Olympic mascot. An iconic symbol and a symbolic sign in Russia ever since, he is a romantic personification of peace and friendship, whereas letting go of 'the red balloon is meant to signal the end of the (very red) Soviet Russia, and ''the dream of an era with great hope for the future,'' according to the official media handouts' (*The Atlantic*, February 7, 2014). Whilst it is doubtful that the balloon would trigger the same emotional attachment among Russians, it is a symbol of great significance, which shows that Russia is ready to shed its red skin and step into the future, albeit not by repeat its fatal mistakes of the 20th century and forget its past.

8.5 Conclusion

The messages and identity transmitted through the Moscow'80 Olympics were generally clear, although they did encounter opposition in the West in view of the conflicting interests and ideologies. In a nutshell, the message of the Moscow'80 Olympics, catering to both domestic and international audiences, was as follows: we have built a multinational heaven in our country and are committed to spreading peace in the world. Although this was denied by some inside the country and abroad, it was equally resonant amongst large numbers of people. The current Russian identity as summed up by the Sochi 2014 Olympics remains rather obscure and, taking into account the plethora of difficult to decipher locally grounded symbols, has become lost in translation. Foreign audiences received mixed signals in the ceremony due to the unorthodox lumping together of different epochs, juxtaposing at times utterly clashing symbols and underlying traditions to knit together a credible uniform narrative. Taking into account the fact that the broad audiences also did not make sufficient effort to understand the context, the messages did not hit the target, which Dejevsky (February 13, 2014) of *The Guardian* found 'unfortunate, because this image – part accurate, part delusional, part aspirational – says quite a lot about how today's Russia wants to be seen

and what it aspires to be'. 'Dreams about Russia' was in a way an exercise of psychoanalysis: through scouring the subconscious and reliving the formative episodes in its history, Russia attempted to obtain several vital answers to existential questions. What answers it uncovered remains to be seen. Regarding the image of itself that Russia favoured at that time, Dejevsky (February 13, 2014) of *The Guardian* thought that 'Russia that was culturally inclusive, both traditional and modern, in which each age, from Muscovy through to the pluses and minuses of Soviet times, had its allotted place'. At the same time, in her comment about Russia's envisioned future, Ioffe (February 8, 2014) of *New Republic* assumed that the show was unambiguous about the hierarchy of nationalities in Russia: 'a historically significant nation but one that is still climbing back up to its historic heights after a historic fall, one that has many nations but of which one is dominant'.

Russia has such a vast array of traditions and national heroes on which to model itself that piling them all together without sufficient moral evaluation and critique might be too confusing even for an average Russian. However, the moral aspect was conspicuously missing in the aesthetic representation of Russian history. Russian classics have always been famed for offering if not some conception of life, like Tolstoy, then some moral and ethical criteria, which mirrored the vices and virtues of the epoch and were an answer to the existing challenges. Despite relying heavily on the best of the Russian classics and the heroes of bygone days, the ceremony was an exciting and technically innovative re-narration of Russian history, which ignited pride and patriotism but did not offer values or a system of meaning. It also did not introduce a viable 'Hero of Our Times', which has traditionally been essential for Russia to make sense of what it is and where it is going. The ceremony emphatically dwelled on the defining and enduring manifestations of Soviet identity, such as space exploration. It paid tribute to Soviet sport and the Moscow Olympics. Yet, instead of showing Russia's

multicultural side, which was the case in Moscow and which was largely gone with the dissolution of the USSR, the ceremony showed its geographical vastness. Whilst the show demonstrated discipline and impeccable orchestration, the lack of individuality, as in the Moscow'80 Ceremonies, this time was remedied by presenting the whole spectacle as a dream of one girl, an indication of the optimistic outlook and the future orientation and peaceful intentions. The good thing compared to Soviet times is that Russia remembers well what it was and what it has done. The questions of what it is and what it wants to be remain largely unanswered. In Moscow, the Soviet Union as a great power offered its vision of the world; in Sochi, as an aspiring great power, Russia was trying to offer a vision of itself. Sochi was a public exercise in self-reflection, albeit neither a confession nor penitence. If in Moscow the USSR conspicuously confirmed its grand mission, in Sochi Russia simply introduced itself.

CHAPTER 9: SPORT AS AN INSTRUMENT OF NATION-BUILDING IN RUSSIA

9.1 Introduction

Previous chapters have addressed the role of SMEs in Russia in terms of identity construction and they have offered an in-depth investigation of the essence and effectiveness of Russia's Olympic SP effort based on the Western media's reading of the two Olympic ceremonies that Russia hosted: the 1980 Moscow and the 2014 Sochi Games. By providing a thorough account of both the evolution of the initial messages sent via the Games and the Western media's embrace thereof, chapter 8 partially answered the overarching research question about how Russia is an outlier case in hosting SMEs. The preceding chapter confirmed the prioritisation of the domestic audience during the Sochi Olympics affair, first and foremost by showing how the demonstration of symbolic or locally-grounded symbols tipped the scales during the ceremonies. This presented albeit not a stark but still a contrast to the 1980 Moscow ceremonies where iconic or, as it were, universal signs somewhat outbalanced culturally relevant inward directed messages. What this means is that, notwithstanding the fact that in both instances the domestic audience was the preeminent concern, organisers of the Moscow Games, taking account of the Soviet Union's great power status and thus the need to confirm its mission in the world, after all showed considerable sensitivity to the frame of reference of the versatile foreign publics. It is primarily by shining a spotlight on this particular aspect of domestic SP that the previous chapter disclosed how and why the Russian understanding of SP is different from Nye's initial outward-directed concept (1990). The examination of the ceremonies has also proved to be indispensable in understanding what role SMEs play in the construction of a new Russian national identity. Accordingly, this has highlighted the intrinsic elements in Russia's national narrative and, in view of the protracted post-Soviet traumas and existential insecurities, has showed which links between now and the

past make Russia whole again. Regarding the thesis' endeavour to establish the relative success or failure of the 2014 Sochi Olympics in terms of their SP promotion and identity construction functions, this issue is most delicate and certainly requires further investigation. What became extremely clear in the course of this research is that the Olympics were an unparalleled trigger to Russians' self-identification as a nation even before the Crimean affair, which, however, without doubt magnified this effect of the Games. This Olympic-Crimean effect, which is impossible to untangle, led to patriotism and a type of ecstatic co-option at home, but also denigrated all Russia's SP efforts globally. This particular complexity to separate the Olympics and the geopolitical effect both at home and abroad ironically also entrenches Russia as an outlier among the SMEs hosts. Considering that the elites attached the greatest importance to the local population and domestic affairs, the Olympics could be deemed to be an unquestionable triumph. If, however, one keeps in mind that appealing to international publics was still a part of the 52-billion-dollar agenda, the legacy of the Sochi Games certainly leaves far too many questions at least for this thesis to answer.

This chapter makes an effort to contribute to the picture emerging so far by offering a joint analysis of the pertinent state documents and transcripts of the interviews conducted with Russian sports officials and knowledgeable figures. Whereas the previous chapters laid out what SP, both domestic and traditional, means in Russia in the context of the Olympics, as well as offered a snapshot of its identity that transpired throughout the ceremonies, this chapter sets out more specifically the nation-building functions of the Olympics. It also scrutinises the whole concept of *fizkultura* and the sports system in terms of their nation-building capacities. By considering the 'significance of physical culture and sport within a wider social, cultural, and political framework' (Grant, 2013, p.1) on the basis of the interviews with people in Russia's sporting hierarchy and knowledgeable figures and state

documents, in the course of this chapter the author attempts to introduce a more holistic picture of Russia's governance and social dynamics.

9.2 Nation Building

One of the overarching themes to emerge from the interviews with sports officials and opinion leaders was the exceptional role of sport and international sport successes for nation-building in Russia. All interviewees indicated that sport victories have historically been couched in terms of the common achievement of the state and the nation, thereby creating a rare bond for Russia. As one of the interviewees (Interviewee number 1= Int1, 13:25) observed:

> There is a return to a great power consciousness taking place through sport. It has been happening for the last ten years. There was an ideological abyss in the 90s. There was neither money nor any interests. Since the 2000s there came financing and an understanding that this sphere could be useful if not for manipulating the nation then for the consolidation of patriotism, for nation-building, for the cultivation of national consciousness.

This comment clearly points out the nationally significant and multi-faceted functions with which sport is entrusted in Russia and establishes the moment when it was adopted by the government for these strategic needs. Moreover, this view partially corresponds to the main idea behind the adoption of the Strategy of the Development of Physical Culture and Sport in Russian Federation in the period until 2020 (hereinafter 'Strategy') in 2009, which defines the main outlines of the State's policy in this sphere (p.1):

> Improvement of the socio-economic situation in the last decade had a positive effect on the overcoming of negative trends in the sphere of physical culture and sport, evident in the 90s… However, the level of development of physical culture and sport does not correspond to the overall positive socio-economic changes in the Russian Federation.

This tendency of sport assuming a level of increased importance is evident from the analysis of the President's Annual Address to the Federal Assembly (hereinafter 'Address'), where in

the period from 2000 to 2007, the year when the Olympics were awarded to Russia, Putin mentioned sport three times, compared to 38 times and three times the Olympic Games in the period from 2008 to 2016. Broadly, as the interview findings and the documents suggest, sport in general and SMEs in particular, apart from the utilitarian function of the promotion of healthy lifestyles and image building and foreign policy functions which will be discussed further, fulfil the following internal functions:

a) National consolidation;

b) National mobilisation;

c) Patriotism stimulation / connecting epochs;

d) Regime legitimisation / psychological substitution;

e) Construction of a New Russian Person / psychological verification / overcoming of inferiority complex.

All these functions fall within the ambitious project of nation-building but each warrants a separate discussion. Firstly, however, there is a need to examine the reasons and antecedents of sport and SMEs being chosen as a failure-free cardinal tool for nation-building, or more correctly for nation revitalisation. As one of the interviewees observed (Int2, 1:43), the nation-building function of the Sochi Olympics involved a 'stimulation of the feeling of the strong nation with an exceptional national spirit among the Russian audience'. Putin in this respect precisely pointed to the 'moral aspect' behind the Olympics:

> After the fall of the USSR, after the quite difficult, and let's be frank, bloody events in Caucasus, the society was depressed and pessimistic. We needed to shake it up, to understand and to feel that we can organise grand projects, do it in time and maintain high quality standards, and not only in the defence sphere but also in the humanitarian sphere, including elite sport (Interview to Russian and Foreign Media, 2014).

Although, as this research will further discuss, the practical revitalisation of the nation and the promotion of healthy lifestyles through sport actively takes place, in the words of one of the respondents (Int7, 17:15):

> People will not rally around the flag because male life expectancy increased by five years. These are intangible changes…For the government, especially for the Russian government, which historically favors such grand celebrations and mega-events, it is easier to hold the Olympics.

The words of the other interviewee (Int2, 31:37) are instrumental here as they not only explain the propensity of the Russian elite for big projects, but also show how the bond between the elite and the nation is established:

> We need to show greatness, and greatness could only be projected through something big, something like a nation-wide construction project, Trans-Siberian highway, something like that. Sport is a convenient instrument. Sport success is tantamount to success of the nation. The Moscow Games meant the efficiency and success of the Soviet model.

What is interesting in this respect is that interviewees almost unanimously expressed a view that a national idea in Russia means ambitious national projects like the space programme, for example. The next interviewee's (Int11, 44:32) observation is a noteworthy illustration of the issue in question:

> Sport becomes a pivotal idea. I see two reasons for that. What were the traditional things for the Russians to be proud of? These were two things – war and sport. Well, there was the third one – we used to fly into space. There was nothing else. And this Soviet tradition migrated into the new Russian tradition. We are a great sports nation. And this is true.

What puts war and sport in the same line for Russians is that they were dominant in sport throughout the second half of the twentieth century, and won the greatest and bloodiest war of that century: World War II. The following comment (Int1, 28:26) vividly demonstrates the interconnectedness of these events in Russian people's collective memory:

> The symbolism of victory takes its roots from the sacred place of May 9th, the Victory Day, and sports victories fit very well into such a national myth. We won the Great Patriotic War, we won in space, and we are winning in sport. Victory is a foundation, the greatest value for an identity of a modern Russian person.

Another opinion (Int9, 45:54) further illustrates the meaning of victory for the Russians:

> The thing is that Russian people cannot be simply happy when they have a house, a car and a pet – they need to feel a spiritual harmony. Pursuit of victories is a part of such spirituality. I feel myself a part of a great power when I see that the representatives of my country achieve victories. And this has a strong effect.

The government, through hosting SMEs and investing in elite sports, satisfies this popular demand for victories while realising its propensity for nation-wide great projects. Putin cannot repeat the victory of the Great Patriotic War but he can reinvent the national victorious myth by hosting the Olympics. Words of Medvedev in 2009, dedicated to the upcoming 65th Victory Day Anniversary, vividly show how the Olympics fit into this nation-building enterprise: 'We have chosen our way, our grandfathers and fathers won then. We need to win now' (Address 2009).

The other likely reason for the government to embrace sport as the basis for the national idea is contained in the following words (Int4, 25:37), which through the context of sport also exemplify the role of the West as a significant other in Russian identity:

> There has always been a connection between sport and a national idea. Why? After the demise of the Soviet Union, after the economics, everything fell into the abyss, what was the easiest to revive and rebuild? Agriculture? It would take around fifty years. Industry was destroyed to a despicable extent. What regards the competitiveness with the West, only very few spheres could still stand equal. It would take decades to rebuild the industry, whereas it would take a moment to resuscitate sport. Therefore, it was the national idea of the 90s and then 2000s. It was only in sport where we could stand our ground against the West. It was the essence of our national idea and it still exists.

One of the respondents (Int2) in this respect drew attention to the idea that the practice of nation-building around sport is specific to non-liberal states and has particular popularity in

the post-Soviet republics. He (Int2, 1:06:34), however, pointed out the pitfalls inherent in such projects:

> There are two dangers here. First, it is an unpredictability of sports results. I think if there were no such sports successes in Sochi there wouldn't have been such a national uplift. It is hard to guarantee success. And a national idea has to reinvent and reproduce itself, like in Japan where it doesn't depend on yen fluctuations. It is very dangerous to tie up a national idea to sport. Financial investments wouldn't play a big role here. It was possible in the Soviet Union but now there is multipolarity and the level of competition is very high and grows. So such an approach is very risky. The second thing is that gigantism is very expensive and requires a closed regime, like in China for example, where if there is any disapproval it would remain a local affair. Mega-events as triggers for the national rhetoric can work for some time but not on a regular basis.

Although sport successes seem to be a precarious basis for the national idea in view of the difficulty of securing a constant level of performance, there is a government order for victories officially stated in the Strategy (p.3). Such a success target includes:

- Russian national teams reaching the top three at the Olympic Games and in the unofficial medal count ranking;
- Russia winning the unofficial medal count at the 2014 XXII Olympic Games in Sochi;
- Russian student national team winning the unofficial medal count at the 2013 XXVII Summer Universiade in Kazan.

The last two goals have been conspicuously reached and, as for the first one, according to the Ministry of Sport Report concerning the results of its work in 2016 and the main targets for 2017 to 2019 (hereinafter 'Report 2016'), 'There has been an increase of the Russian athlete ratio, who became Olympic medallists, in the overall number of Russian athletes who took part in the Olympics – 36 per cent (the planned figure – 30 per cent)'. Apart from this, the Public Opinion Foundation data from 2016 show that not only are 55 per cent of the population satisfied with the Russian athletes' performances in the international arena, but a striking 48 per cent also think that elite sport development and international victories should be amongst the top three priorities on the government's agenda ('About Development of

Professional Sport', August 24, 2016, fom.ru). In contrast to the unpersuasive 19 per cent who do not share this opinion, the majority of people are convinced that sport successes define the authority of the state in the world. The significance of sport victories for the Russian collective imagination is evidenced by 42 per cent of the population claiming that a developed country must have impressive sporting achievements. In addition, 41 per cent suggest that a country that does not have serious sporting achievements cannot be considered to be developed (ibid). Therefore, considering such public attitudes and the fact that the government order for sport successes has been reached with a surplus for now, sport holds its popularity as a nation-building tool.

9.2.1 National Consolidation

Although the concepts of national consolidation, mobilisation and patriotism have much in common, there are several substantial nuances in how and via what mechanisms they are engendered in Russia. As a result, to convey all possible nuances, the researcher will discuss the Olympic Games and sport's effect on consolidation in terms of the values they symbolise and promote in Russia. Mobilisation will be discussed in context with the Russian current foreign policy predicaments and the ensuing national programmes of patriotic education and revival, alongside the strengthening of the links between sports and the army. Finally, patriotism will be discussed in terms of an emotional boost and as a unique Russian trait and a basis for a national myth. It will also be examined as a strategy of mass consciousness engineering.

As one of the interviewees opined (Int8, 6:32), 'there could be no great nation without the grand idea of sacrificing oneself for the good and glory of the country. This forms the might of our country'. She went on to say (9:24) that the main feature of the Moscow' 80 Olympics was 'the greatest subhuman effort of Russian people to make them the best ever'. This trait

was also pertinent to the Sochi Games, which from their inception were couched in terms of the greatest project in Russia since the collapse of the USSR and espoused as a common achievement of the whole nation; the people's symbolic co-ownership was widely emphasised. The need for a nationwide consolidation became first apparent during the Applicant City phase and the Candidate City phase (2005 to 2007) to raise the chances with the IOC. The drumming up of domestic support to increase the bid's feasibility was, however, clearly in line with the broad elite's strategy of nation building:

> The strong support of the Federal Government was a valuable asset in making the bid a national project. It was important to position the bid as a "national priority" and a cause that would need the support of the entire nation in order to be successful. It was important to position Sochi's success as the culmination of Russia's long and challenging economic and social evolution over the past 15 years. Sentiments of national pride, accomplishment and unity were integral to the domestic messaging around the bid (Sochi 2014 Official Report, p.38, hereinafter 'Sochi Report').

In view of this, during the bid and the preparation process, and during the Sochi Olympics, the consolidation rhetoric revolved around two broad issues:

a) Russia as a returning great power;

b) The frantic search for national values and identity.

The Olympics in Russia coincided with the year of culture, which was framed as 'a return to our cultural roots, to questions of patriotism and moral' (Address 2014). As the statistics show, it indeed became an apogee of Russia's consolidation.[4] Putin in 2014 outlined the national idea, which very much corresponded to the image of Russia transmitted through the Sochi Ceremonies.[5] It included 'a healthy family and a healthy nation, traditional values of our ancestors combined with an orientation into the future, and stability as a condition of development and progress' (Address 2014). Speaking about 2014 as a threshold year in

[4] For the discussion of a symbiosis of the Olympic and Crimean effect on Putin approval rates and domestic soft power see chapter 7

[5] For the discussion of pervasive cultural and historical symbols in Russian identity see chapter 8

Russia's self-identification, he maintained that Russia 'emphatically declared itself a strong independent state with a thousand-year history and great traditions, as a nation consolidated by common values and goals' (Address 2015). Here, a distinction should be made between tangible values, or as one interviewee indicated 'sacred achievements – sport, army, ballet and the Bolshoi Theatre', and Russian spiritual and moral values. Although the former have always maintained their place in Russian identity and increased its SP, the turmoil of the wild 1990s shook Russia's moral vector. Consequently, Putin first brought up the necessity to remember and cultivate the values that make Russia a single nation and that would form the basis of a new national idea and of the future envisioned Russia in 2000 in his first Presidential Annual Address to the Federal Assembly:

> I am convinced that development of our society is impossible without an agreement on common goals. And these goals are not just material. Moral and spiritual values are no less important. Unity of Russia is based on peculiar to our people patriotism, cultural traditions, and common historical memory. Nowadays, there is a revival of interest to our art, theatre, cinema, to our roots, to what is dear to all of us. I am confident, that this is the beginning of a new spiritual revival.

The need for 'consolidation around basic nation-wide tasks and values' for 'achievement of great goals worthy of a great nation', in turn, became a big theme in his Addresses in 2003 to 2004. For him, consolidation was broadly necessary 'to make people proud, to make them increase the wealth of our country, to make them remember and respect our history'. He was also quite frank about the price of such great goals invoking pride:

> In the course of our history Russia and its citizens accomplished and accomplish a truly historical heroic deed. Heroic deed for the territorial integrity of the country in the name of peace and stability here. Preservation of the state on the large territory, preservation of the unique community of people with a strong position in the world. This is not just an immense effort. This also means immense losses and deprivations of our people. This is an essence of the historical way of Russia. This is a way to reproduce it as a strong state.

Indeed, this is a mobilisation-like consolidation as losses and deprivations are not typical for other states and particularly not for great powers, even embarking on ambitious projects such as SMEs. In his 2004 Address, Putin explicitly talked about Russia finally being ready and capable of accomplishing long-term national tasks and, importantly, using instruments of foreign policy for solving these tasks. In this context, he also mentioned the need to cultivate a will for victories. This rhetoric is not accidental as, according to the Sochi Report, 'on 4 July 2005, the ROC announced its unanimous support for a Sochi bid for the 2014 Winter Games' (p.15). Exceptional in this regard, however, as compared to the public opinion in many advanced states, is an enthusiastic endorsement of the Olympic Games and a justification of the exorbitant spending on such nation-wide projects by half of the interviewees. Thus, one respondent (Int4, 13:35) thought:

> As regards the whole counter-propaganda about the soaring costs…so what? We are such a rich country then that we can afford it! I think we should be proud instead and not see in the negative light that so much money was spent. The money was spent, so let it be.

Another interviewee (Int10, 14:43) likewise shared this opinion:

> Such projects as the Sochi Olympics are one-in-a-lifetime. Russia might not see another Olympics on its home turf.… It means that we have money, we have the potential. We the oil and gas money and we invest it right. These events are tantamount to the prestige of the state. Only serious, ambitious players can afford such events…It's an honour to host such an event, an exceptional prestige for us.

From the comments above, it is obvious that the government initiative resonated extremely well amongst the public. Thus, according to the opinion poll commissioned by the IOC, the support for the Olympics stood at 79 per cent in Sochi and 80 per cent across Russia (Sochi Report, p.42). More important here seems to be the fact that the idea of sacrifice for the common good, an acceptance of the need for grandiose higher-order projects, is internalised by the Russian populace. Accordingly, it is a part of the national narrative itself. Instrumental

here was above all Putin's endorsement of the Olympics as the grandest construction project in the world during the last decade, which justified any possible 'malfunctions' (Putin 2014, Interview to Russian and Foreign Media). Unsurprisingly, all the respondents indicated that the Games brought about a feeling of great national fulfilment. This did not happen on its own, however. According to the Sochi Report, a massive national advertising campaign was launched and the 2014 Sochi Ambassador Programme was created to stimulate a positive perception of the Games. As a result of these initiatives, 'the entire country was involved in the preparation processes' (p.13). It needs to be mentioned that there was a noteworthy adaptation of the communication campaign in view of 'different objectives and proposition from the international campaign (winning public support)' (Sochi Report, p.39). Therefore, the international campaign 'Gateway to the Future', when customised to the Russian market, became 'Together we will win'. Formulated this way, it chimed with the main objective behind the government's projects, which seem to be engendering consolidation through the feelings of co-ownership and victory. Thus, according to the Sochi Report (p.39), the domestic campaign:

- …was uniting and patriotic;
- …demonstrated everyone's contribution to the success of the project;
- …focused on a measurable goal – winning.

Indeed, speaking about the national idea and cardinal national values in 2007, the year of the Olympic bid, Putin emphasised that whilst Russia stood on the threshold of its Renaissance, it entirely depended on a degree of unity and consolidation in society (Address 2007). As a practical mechanism of this consolidation, Putin suggested 'making [citizens] real participants in and co-owners of common constructive plan', by means of which 'every Russian citizen should feel his involvement in the history of the nation'. According to this logic, the Sochi Olympic Games were positioned as a 'sound and feasible project that would leave as

substantial legacy for the entire nation' (Sochi Report, p. 39). Regarding the common moral reference points essential for accomplishing nation-wide tasks, Putin listed 'respect of the language, of unique cultural values, of memory of the ancestors, of every page of our history'. Inevitably, as is apparent from the quotations above and as was underlined by the interviewees, in the process of probing for national values, Putin drew heavily from Christianity. Moreover, he has repeatedly stressed that the peaceful coexistence and cross-penetration of different cultures and ethnicities has always formed the basis of the spirituality of the Russian nation.[6] To sum up, there has been consistency in the nation-building policies and rhetoric during the years of Medvedev's presidency; the only noble addition was competitiveness, which he suggested as being 'a part of a national idea' (Address 2008).

9.2.2 National Mobilisation

Mobilisation rhetoric has become a matter of exigency and yet is not a particularly unwelcome intangible legacy of the Sochi Olympics and the Crimea incorporation. Whereas consolidation, patriotism, and legitimisation are the results of the inextricable symbiotic 'Olympic-Crimean' effect, they were from the outset amongst the planned-for legacies of the government's Olympics agenda. The incorporation of Crimea simply had a magnifying effect due to its timing. As one interviewee (Int2, 58:47) speculated:

> It is hard to tell the Olympic and the Crimean legacy apart now. I think the Ukrainian events and the Olympics have intensified each other. They had the same trajectory. The idea was to show strength and this was done. We took the most of the medals, organised the impeccable Olympics, and took a swath of a coveted land.

The mobilisation effect in this respect turned out to be an unanticipated benefit considering the evolving circumstances and hard-power concerns becoming a top priority. According to one interviewee (Int1, 17:12), the intensification of the hard power discourse in sport represents 'an overall tendency of militarisation of the information sphere in view of the

[6] For the discussion of the 'friendship of nations' messages at the Russian Olympics see chapter 8

unstable and hostile international environment'. At the same time, despite the generally peaceful nature of the Olympics, they still contained an implicit hard power statement. As summed up by the interviewee (Int5, 14:58), 'it is a serious internal message that the state wants to build a healthy and a strong nation, which would be able to defend itself, its honour, and its potential'.

Having realised the unique potential of sports and militarised patriotism for mobilisation, the leadership did not have to reinvent the wheel. Such an alliance was particularly effective in the 1930s and the elites simply had to borrow from the tried-and-tested toolkit and to restore popular programmes and traditions. Although one would not come upon militarisation sentiments in the official documents and statements about the Olympics, as transpired during the course of the interviews, sports and the army, indeed, seem to be the most coherent and articulate generators of the Russian modern myth. As this thesis has shown, the legitimacy of the army in the national psyche was born on the battlefields of the Great Patriotic War and was reinstated in the mountains of the Caucasus.

Sport in Russia even sooner was endowed with a sacred significance at the mass *fizkultura* parades of the 1930s; it was canonised during in the 1950s and 1960s (USSR becomes dominant at the Olympic Games) and was strategically revitalised in the first decades of the twenty-first century. Not until after the end of WWII was sport put on a peaceful track in the USSR (or rather put up a peaceful front having donned an Olympic kit in lieu of the military uniform). Even during the Moscow 80 Olympics, as this thesis has discussed, despite their intense emphasis on peace, the military was widely represented at the ceremonies sending quite unambiguous albeit understated signs. Remarkably, initially sport in Putin's Russia, although not shedding its utilitarian functions of preparation for the military service, was seen as a safe and uncontroversial way to rebuild civic pride and patriotism. It was one of the few

feasible mediums to reinstate the international legitimacy of the state. Mega-events in this respect were envisaged to show that Russia has changed its colours in earnest.[7] Having put on a friendly face through sport, the Russian bear, however, bares its teeth through it anew. Unsurprisingly, an effort from above to recreate the Soviet fruitful symbiosis of these institutions resonates well with the population (Int4, 28:48):

> everything which had to do with sports in the army always showed the best results. Let's take CSKA[8]: all sports disciplines under the club's umbrella were on a very high level. So the army helped, the army system supported sports. Therefore, I think that there is nothing bad if such a symbiosis, influence of the army on sport and vice versa – sport on the army is revived. I think it's only for the better and the right thing to do.

The most feasible route to nation-wide mobilisation, therefore, was to reinforce and recreate the links and cross-fertilisation of sports and the army, currently the most popularised trades in Russia. Spontaneous emotional mobilisation was quickly supported by official rhetoric and initiatives, before being channelled into concrete programmes. The longevity and scale of this tendency undeniably depends on foreign policy developments and the geopolitical climate. It seems, nonetheless, that the mobilisation tendency or the stimulation of militarised patriotism, taking into account the number of targeted government programmes, will exist for some time. As the next observation shows (Int1, 21:44), 'In Crimea Russia has extolled the best possible benefits. Yet it could have behaved differently, taking into account possible sanctions, worsening of diplomatic relations. However, the choice was made in favour of hard power'. Another interviewee's comment (Int12, 09:57) is a reference to the previously discussed internalisation of personal sacrifice and deprivations (sanctions had a negative effect on the ruble and the overall economy) for higher-order goals and assumed greatpowerness, 'Crimea

[7] The symbolism of red colour at the Sochi Olympic Ceremonies and a girl letting go of the red balloon as signifiers of Russia's aspired identity are discussed in chapter 8
[8] Central Sport Club of the Army

was perceived as an unquestionable glory by the ordinary people. Few gave thought for the legal side of the affair and the lethal economic and foreign policy repercussions'.

It needs to be noted that in the case of Russia, mobilisation appears to pursue two main objectives:

a) The preservation of cultural integrity and originality (perseverance in the face of assault from Western values);
b) Physical defence against foreign pressures.

Putin first mentioned the mobilisation 'of all intellectual capacities, concerted effort of the leadership, civil society, all people in the country' for the fulfilment of national tasks in his Address in 2003. Such an emergency-like mobilisation for ambitious national projects, although historically exploited by Russian elites and extolled as a national virtue, might not be necessarily a positive moment. As one of the respondents opined (Int3, 44:20):

> This is very bad that this is used as part of our ideology. Yet this is a stereotype. If we look at statistics, alcoholism was much less widespread in Russia before the revolution. People didn't have time to drink. There was work ethics and morale. And the Soviet rule undermined that ethics and did not stimulate hard work. And gradually we received a stereotype of a lazy man who drinks from time to time and when necessary does some work. This is not right. This is a deformation of the national character which I find very dangerous.

Although initially the official rhetoric was far from the post-Olympics mobilisation and pursued mostly utilitarian objectives, in his 2006 Address the President insisted on the need to revive physical and military patriotic programmes and facilitate the development of military technical sports as preparation for military service. In view of this, 'increasing the effectiveness of physical training for youth of pre-conscription age', improvement of physical training of servicemen and development of military-applied sports entered the list of top priorities for the Strategy (p.6). As a result of according initiatives, by 2020, 80 per cent of

conscripts should be fit for service; no fewer than 50 per cent should have a sports title and no fewer than 90 per cent should have passed physical preparation tests with 'merit' or 'distinction' (Strategy 2009, p.8). The improvement of fitness for the conscripts thereupon is endorsed as a way to 'resist any attempts of foreign pressures on Russia … and reduce the seduction to exert such pressures under any pretext' (Putin, Address 2006). Attempts of outer pressures, in turn, range from 'myths about Russian aggression, propaganda, accusations of interference in the election processes, to harassment and bullying of our Paralympians'[9] (Address 2016). Ironically, the Russian sword of peace, or sport as its most reliable SP weapon, in this case was turned against Russia. Although the resistance for the time being is mostly confined to the discursive sphere, the resolute emphasis is on the protection of every aspect of sovereignty: territorial, moral, and ideological. This was declared by Putin to be an unwavering priority in his 2005 Address. At times of civilisational standoffs with the West, Putin again turns to the mobilisational faculty of traditional values, which are also promoted as a part of Russia's SP package:

> Destruction of traditional values 'from above' [acceptance of equality of good and evil] not only leads to negative consequences for the societies, but is antidemocratic, because is implemented based on abstract ideas, contrary to the will of the majority, who does not accept the change, which takes place and a suggested proposed revision (Putin Address, 2013).

Showing considerable consistency, in his 2010 Address, the 65th anniversary year of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War, Putin suggested the popularisation of military patriotic games as a traditional and effective method of youth patriotic education in order to 'develop a team spirit, build a strong character, and skills of conduct under the most difficult conditions'. Accordingly, in 2013, in Ryazan under the general supervision of the Ministry of Sports and the All-Russian public-state organisation 'Volunteer Society for Cooperation with the Army,

[9] Reference is to Russian Paralympians being banned from the 2016 Rio Olympics because of the doping scandal at the 2014 Sochi Olympics

Aviation and Navy' (DOSAAF est. 1927), a Spartakiad took place amongst schoolchildren in military-applied and technical sports, which pursued the goal of 'sports-patriotic education of youth of pre-conscription age' (Ministry of Sport Report about results of its work in 2013 and main the main targets for 2014-2017, hereinafter 'Report 2014-2017'). The involvement of DOSAAF, a paramilitary organisation prominent in the USSR in Stalinist times, is a part of the 'sports patronage of military units, higher military educational establishments and higher educational institutions of power structures over educational institutions and children's sports clubs', specifically recommended by the Strategy (p.8). Militarised patriotism, in turn, became a big part of the Programme of Patriotic Education of Citizens of the Russian Federation for the period 2016 to 2020 (hereinafter 'Patriotic Education Programme 2016-20120'), and included, for example, such initiatives as the All-Russian rally 'The Fate of Russia – is my Fate', which has taken place annually since 2006 and passes Hero Cities and cities honoured with the title of military glory (Report 2014-2017). Participants include members of the military patriotic clubs, WWII veterans, cadets, and members of the DOSAAF. Moreover, as part of the militarised patriotism stimulation in 2015, all mass physical culture and sports events were dedicated to the 70th anniversary of the Victory in the Great Patriotic War, which included more than 700 events and around 80 million participants (Ministry of Sport Report about results of its work in 2015 and the main targets for 2016-2018, hereinafter 'Report 2015'). As a result of such top-down initiatives, in 2014, 61 thousand people practiced 16 military-applied sports, and 230 military-applied sports events took place in 2016 as a part of the Unified Calendar Plan of sports events. Moreover, by the Decree of the Ministry of Sport on 2 July 2016 №630, the Interdepartmental Working Group was created regarding the development of military-applied and service-applied sports (Report 2016).

Although the Patriotic Education Programme pursues both the civil patriotic and spiritually moral development of youths, since 2014 and fundamentally with the adoption of the fourth Programme in 2016, the former objective seems to prevail. The first thing to note here is an intensification of the mobilisation rhetoric in the document text, which forms a stark contrast to the predominantly repetitive previous three programmes. Whereas the previous documents (2001 to 2015) still paid attention to defence issues (e.g. the restoration of army prestige), the emphasis was placed on the revival of traditional values, consolidation, and the strengthening of unity and friendship of nations of the Russian Federation (Patriotic Education Programme 2001-2005, Section II). They first and foremost envisaged 'a formation and development of socially significant values, citizenship and patriotism' based on 'heroic events of national history, outstanding state achievements in politics, economics, science, culture and sport and which retain yet the qualities of moral values' (ibid). The civic patriotism, however, seems to have given way to implicit militarised patriotism:

> [The Programme was] prepared based on the accumulated in course of the last decades experience and traditions of patriotic education of citizens considering the importance of provision of Russian civil identity, continuity of education process, **targeting the formation of Russian patriotic consciousness in difficult circumstances of economic and geopolitical rivalry** (authors bold) (Patriotic Education Programme 2016-2020, p.4).

The level of society consolidation 'for provision of national security and sustainable development' and the 'formation of moral-psychological and physical readiness', amongst other things, is provided for by 22,000 patriotic organisations, including 2,000 defence sports camps, where 21.6 per cent of youths are involved (Patriotic Education Programme 2016-2020, p.3-4). To couch the objectives of the programme in a more pragmatic manner, the emphasis is placed on co-opting the youths into serving in the armed forces and law-enforcement organisations, whilst maintaining the others in a state of dynamic patriotic limbo.

The most important and symbolic post-Olympic government initiative was the revival of the GTO complex, which became the basis of physical education within the population. It is envisaged as a core agent in 'facilitating development of human potential and strengthening the health of the nation' (Presidential Decree on the Russian Physical Culture and Sports Complex "Ready for Labour and Defence", 2014). The GTO complex caters to representatives of all age-groups, who for successfully passing the tests are entitled to receive bronze, silver, or gold badges and other substantial benefits. Such benefits include, for example, heightened state scholarships for the holders of the gold badges and privileged treatment when applying for a place at university (A Set of Measures for Stimulation of Various Age Groups for Completing the GTO Tests for 2015-2017). There is also a high-profile promotion campaign involving all state media channels and the so-called GTO Ambassadors include famous opinion leaders such as Alexandr Karelin, Nikolai Valuev, Aleksandr Popov, and Larisa Latunina. The popularity of the programme is evident not only from the numbers of those who took the tests (one million 37 thousand across 2,452 test centres in 2016) but also from the number of visits to the All-Russian GTO site www.GTO.ru (65 million visits in the same year) (Report 2016). As part of the complex propaganda machine and as a reward for the champions, the tradition of GTO festivals has also been reinvented. Accordingly, by 2020, the number of those who pass the tests should reach 40 per cent of those who took them, and such a figure should represent a viable increase not only in the overall fitness level of the population, but essentially in the fitness level of the conscripts. Significantly, shortly after the introduction of the complex, by the Changes to the State Programme of the Russian Federation 'Development of Physical Culture and Sport', from 16 August 2014 the Ministry of Defence was added to the list of institutions responsible for its implementation. From the standpoint of this thesis, it is essential to note that the introduction

of the GTO complex in 1931 marked the start of the final politicisation of sport in the USSR, and thus elevated its status to new heights. In Russia, as previously discussed, it is not only a mobilisation initiative; it also represents the most feasible attempt to leverage patriotism. It is the only obvious tangible legacy of the Sochi Olympics, albeit as a militarised version after the Crimean affair.

9.2.3 Patriotism

The effect of the Sochi Olympics and the incorporation of Crimea, two mega-events in Russian modern history occurring in just one year, impelled Putin to finally settle on patriotism as the only viable national idea in Russia. It is not that a notion of patriotism was banished to obscurity previously, as indeed it systematically featured in Annual Presidential Addresses and the first state Programme of Patriotic Education was introduced in 2001, yet an official accumulation by the national leader of all cultural codes and values, national objectives and priorities under the umbrella of patriotism came in 2016 (*The Moscow Times*, February 4, 2016). Whereas the previous section focused on the antecedents of militarised patriotism and how sport is put at its service, this part will focus on the civic side of patriotism, which nonetheless is also inextricably tied to sport.

First and foremost, a distinction should be made between patriotism as a very particular Russian feeling, in terms of spontaneous and emotional feedback to several outstanding and heroic successes of the state as a whole and its individual representatives, and patriotism as premeditatedly fashioned by the government's idea of an ideal citizen, a New Russian Person, which will be discussed later (see section 9.2.5). Spontaneous patriotism, national pride, and inspiration were indicated by the interviewees as the chief intangible and enduring legacies of SMEs in Russia. The words of the next interviewee (Int3, 06:27) illustrate the general attitude:

> The Olympics have played an unsurpassed role. There was a massive patriotic outpouring and celebration which was very sincere. Even if we take the Universiade in Kazan, […] I could feel such an inspiration among people when they walked the streets and they were sincerely happy, I don't mean just the tourists but the locals. And I can't even recall any examples from my experience of such a consolidation and mass celebration and happiness. There was the same atmosphere in Sochi but on an inflated scale.

The latter type of patriotism was defined by Medvedev in 2008 Address:

> Patriotism. Under the soberest, most scrupulous judgment of national history and our far from perfect present. Under all possible circumstances. Always – belief in Russia, deep attachment to native land, to our great culture.

A string of SMEs in Russia serve precisely the objective of engendering the uninterrupted reproduction of patriotic outbursts, whereas a Patriotic Education Programme sets out methods and a strategy of infiltrating patriotism as a certain system of meaning and an outlook into public consciousness, thus making it into a static modus operandi. These two states of patriotism are indivisibly linked and inform each other in several ways. A source of spontaneous patriotism is before long streamlined into a national myth and made a part of the Patriotic Education Programme; canonised historical nodal points in the meantime prompt public responses to future events.

The Patriotic Education Programme 2016 to 2020 envisages 'systematic and targeted activities of the state, institutions of civil society and a family in forming in citizens a sense of high patriotic consciousness' (p.2). The Patriotic Education is supposed to activate an 'interest in Russian history, cultivate respect to the past and its heroic pages, including preservation of the memory about heroic deeds of defenders of Motherland' (p.7). Accordingly, a central facet of patriotic education and by default of the legitimacy of the whole of Putin's system involves concerted initiatives to connect epochs and generations. The Olympics in Sochi, amongst other things, were also an endeavour to give a new lease of life to the iconic Soviet resort, and thus they are in perfect compliance with the overall policy of the resurrection of

historical symbols and state continuity. Putin's words during the 2012 Address outline the logic behind this state policy:

> For revival of national consciousness we need to tie up epochs and return to an understanding of the simple truth, that Russia began not in 1917 or even in 1991, that we have a single, indivisible thousand-year-old history leaning on which we obtain inner strength and a sense of national development.

It comes as no surprise then that in 2007, the year of the Olympic bid, Putin emphasised the necessity of relying on the values and successes of previous generations in the process of generating newness and modernity. Such a strategy is informed on the one hand by a natural public demand for the preservation of several Soviet legacies, and on the other, by the elites' winding up this nostalgia in the official discourse and in a plethora of documentaries and fiction films. Particularly important both in visualising the aesthetics of the incumbent leadership and the promoted values were the Sochi ceremonies. According to one respondent (Int6, 51:35):

> Many analysts said that the opening ceremony was a quintessence of the Stalin cinematographic style. A lot of mechanisms from the past are being used. To draw parallels and say that there is a return to the Soviet aesthetics would be a generalisation and simplification. But some elements are being used. On the one hand, orthodoxy, autocracy, nationality are the pre-revolutionary principles which are being used and then there are some Soviet models and symbols, such as the friendship of nations.

Another interviewee equally noted that the Olympics first and foremost were meant to emphasise tradition. Speaking further on nostalgia, she speculated that 'many still remember how it was in Moscow in 1980 and tearful Bear the Mascot rhetoric is not accidental in this respect, it is a certain bridge to modernity, a linkage to us today' (Int11, 14:07). The staging of the Olympic Games is a clear attempt to repeat a successful patriotic project of the past and, thus, to satisfy an implicit public demand, whilst the FIFA WC in 2018 and the World Universiade in 2019 are part of the strategy to leverage the effect.

SMEs on the whole not only engender spontaneous patriotism; they also perfectly satisfy the requirements of the civic patriotic education, which entails 'strengthening of the feeling of participation of the citizens in the great history and culture of Russia, provision of continuity and succession of generations of Russians, education of a citizen loving his/her Motherland and family, [a citizen] with a proactive attitude in life' (Patriotic Education Programme 2016-2020, p.5). Here, apart from a massive nation-wide campaign of promoting the Olympics as a common cause and achievement, the role of the volunteer movement is of particular note. The Patriotic Education Programme 2016 to 2020 construes this to be an important instrument of civil patriotic education. Firstly, the volunteers played a major part in transmitting the sense of event co-ownership to the local audience, whilst also essentially forming a positive image of Russia amongst the foreign visitors. The words of next respondent (Int4, 23:54) highlight both issues:

> [Deep emotional engagement] is our exceptional trait, Russian peculiar characteristic. Of course, we are always proud when we are successful at what we do. For example, I spoke to the volunteers who were at the Olympics and they all said that they wanted so much to show how good we are. They had such a strong feeling of co-ownership, involvement. They wanted to show how proud we are. And, indeed, a lot of foreigners singled out this excellent work of volunteers, how hospitable, friendly, kind everything was.

This is consistent with Zhong *et al*.'s (2013, p.396) proposition that:

> The Olympic Games make people-to-people public diplomacy possible in that even a volunteer plays a role in sending the message or improving the national identity of its host city, comparable to what a public diplomat is trying to display to the world.

Moreover, a number of other interviewees raised the question of the important Soviet legacy of sport providing social mobility and, in this case, how volunteering at SMEs benefits youths in Russia:

> For many of [volunteers] the Games became an important step in their career. If you know, in Russia as is in Ukraine social and career mobility is largely constrained by the place we live in. Volunteering was such a big chance even for the kids from

> ordinary families who don't have money for mobility, to visit different cities, to attend trainings, and their career expectations have broadened now. As far as I know from my experience, some volunteers worked in Kazan, then Sochi, and then some were taken to Moscow. I don't say it is a major victory but it was an important moment of social mobility. These people have better chances in life now. It was an opportunity to improve the language skills, learn new languages (Int3, 46:00).

In his 2012 Address, for example, Putin suggested restoring student construction brigades and student sports clubs, which could become 'a social lift for talented, motivated and active youth'. Olympic volunteering, being 'the crest of the volunteerism wave that has swept the country, propelling Russia to eighth place in the World Giving Index and placing the values of Olympism at the centre of young Russian' lives' (Sochi Report Vol.2, p.3), clearly fits this logic and offers similar opportunities.

The politics of state continuity, therefore, are manifested not only in the discursive acceptance and weaving together of all historical periods without any reflection, but, most importantly, on a practical level in the revival of historical practices and traditions, predominantly from the Soviet era. Mass participation sports here bear the palm. To illustrate a point in question, in 2002 the Spartakiads, a famous Soviet legacy, were reintroduced (Information for Inclusion into the Government Report to the State Duma of the Russian Federation about Results of its Work in 2014 in the Sphere of Physical Culture and Sport, hereinafter 'Information 2014'), followed before long by the revival of student competitions in 2008, such as the All-Russian Winter and Summer Universiads. The All-Russian Festival of Student Sport and the All-Russian Student Competitions in Olympic Sports were included onto the Programme of World Universiads (Report 2014-17).

The domination of events for students and schoolchildren is not simply determined by the politics of youth prioritisation but rather largely leverages 'the surge of patriotism and enthusiasm especially among the youths' (Int1, 37:32). As the interviewee (Int1) went on to

remark, ‘whereas the older generation was a bit sceptical, the youth was ecstatic with the sense of co-ownership over [the Olympics]’. As a part of the Patriotic Education Programme, Annual Presidential Competitions amongst schoolchildren were launched in 2010, and there has been a considerable increase in participants from 7.5 million in 2010/11 to 10.1million in 2014/15 (Patriotic Education Programme 2016-2020, p.3). Such a swell in participation cannot be attributed entirely to the Olympic effect, yet according to Putin ‘the victorious for us Sochi Olympics played a huge role in popularisation of a healthy lifestyle’ (Address 2014). Mass participation events include the annual Presidential Sports Games, the All-Russian Mass Ski-Cross ‘Skiing Route of Russia’ and the All-Russian Running Day ‘Cross of the Nation’, where regularly around 1.5 million people take part. There is also the All-Russian Mass Competitions in Sports Orienteering ‘Russian Azimuth’, etc. There are also propagandistic patriotic events, such as ‘I Choose Sport’, ‘Take up Sport’, and the ‘All-Russian Day of *Zarjadka*’.

Putin has repeatedly underlined the importance of the preservation of ethnic cultural codes and historical memory. Despite the eye-catching omission of any national cultures other than Russian culture at the Sochi ceremonies, Moscow in this respect devotedly treads in the Soviet Union’s footsteps and goes to great lengths to support ethnic cultures and such representations as national sports as a way of upholding its legitimacy and stimulating patriotism. Medvedev in his 2008 Address made explicit that ‘support of national cultures and traditions of Russia is a serious factor of strengthening the Federation and is a condition of accord and unity in society’. Therefore, annual sport festivals necessarily involve those in national sports, and there are also special Caucasus Games ‘envisaged to facilitate preservation and development of cultural traditions and national, intrinsically Caucasian sport competitions and games’ (Caucasus Games, 2017).

9.2.4 Leadership Legitimisation / Psychological Substitution

As this thesis demonstrated, the Russian leadership had switched its attention to drumming up domestic SP 'to generate [public] confidence in the political course and trigger unquestionable loyalty to the president' (Int9, 01:45), rather than pursuing traditional SP gains long before the Sochi Olympics opened. Initially a clear priority, the goal of improving the Russian international image through a major athletic event has been sidelined by a deteriorating international environment as well as by Putin losing overwhelming support at home due to a stagnating economy, corruption, and civil rights issues. Thus, it seems that Putin decided to submit an Olympic bid in 2005 (Sochi Report) not in the least to offset his all-time lowest approval rates of 45 per cent since he assumed power. The effects of the world crisis, which reached Russia in 2011, drove his rates down to 48 per cent the same year and they stood at a mere 45 per cent in the pre-Olympic year (Public Opinion Foundation cited in *Argumenty i Facty*, 2015).[10] A consequence of this was the prompting of an intensification of patriotic rhetoric and the prioritisation of the local audience (for comparison of approval rates, see Figure 4 below).

[10] Gallup World Poll estimates of Putin's ratings are more positive yet do not change the overall picture (see Figure 6)

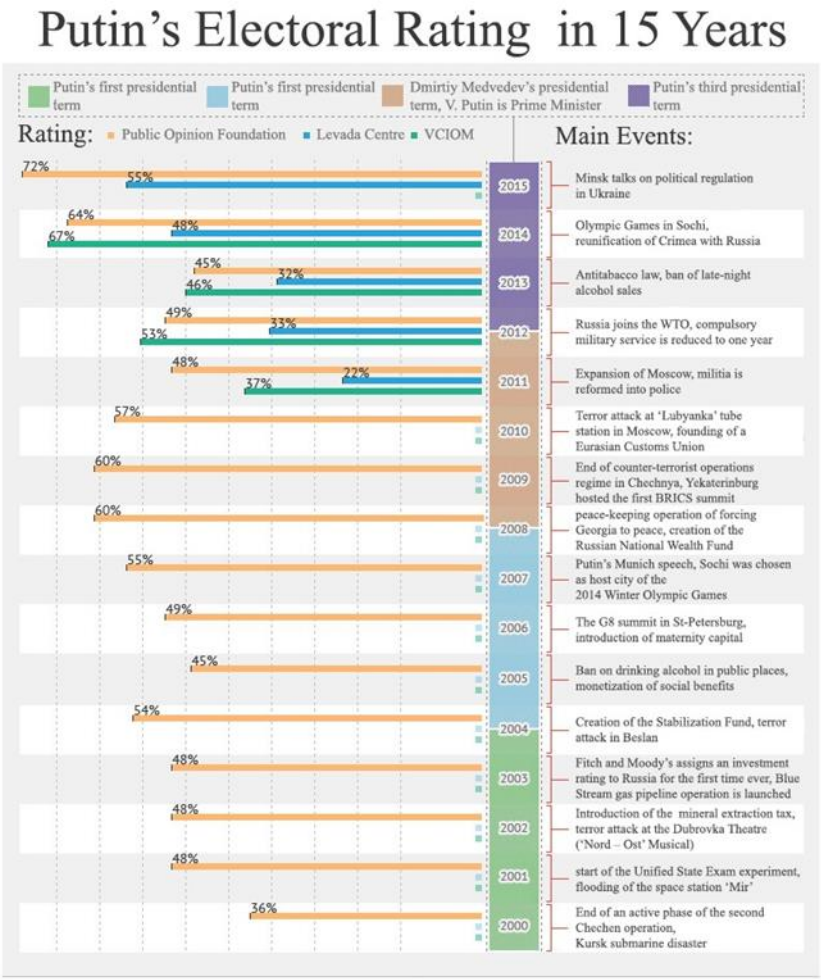


Figure 4: Putin's Approval Rates by Years (adopted from Aif.ru)

The next interview excerpt indicates the timing and rationale behind prioritising the domestic audience during the Olympic project; it importantly draws attention to the fact that patriotism in Russia is by far a substitution and legitimisation mechanism (Int2, 29:24):

> There was a world recession in 2008-2009 which Russia felt only in 2011. The regime closes up, the influence of *siloviki* or security forces growths and life standards stagnate. Dissatisfaction growths, there are protests in Moscow. This was a situation when it was not possible to offer anything material, tangible, and Putin offered the intangible instead. This intangible became patriotism. Patriotism is very strong in Russia and it has a lot in common with the Soviet patriotism. It was impossible to build a nation, a national idea – they could only have been imagined and created.

The nature and scale of the substitution effect of SMEs and national victories on the collective psyche is evident from the next interview extract (Int1, 09:45):

> I asked my students […], why [sports victories matter]. And their answer was that Russian football victories are the most important thing. They didn't care for the low salaries, that the currency is weak. The most important was for the Russian squad to win. And such a psychological substitution mechanism is actively deployed by the elite and it is an unfailing mechanism. There is a return to great power consciousness taking place through sport.

Another exclusive Russian phenomenon is that being a substitution for tangible material gains and progress, SMEs implicitly make a very tangible corruption and money laundering almost legitimate in the eyes of the public, which warrants a separate investigation of the corruption tolerance index in Russia (see Figure 5).[11] As one interviewee maintained (Int4, 03:50):

> it was clear that the money laundering was taking place. It was all evident. It was not a separate, isolated case; it's a problem haunting the whole country. Everybody knows it; nobody makes a secret of it. There is nothing surprising about the money spent. The facilities yet are worth the money spent on them, that's what I think.

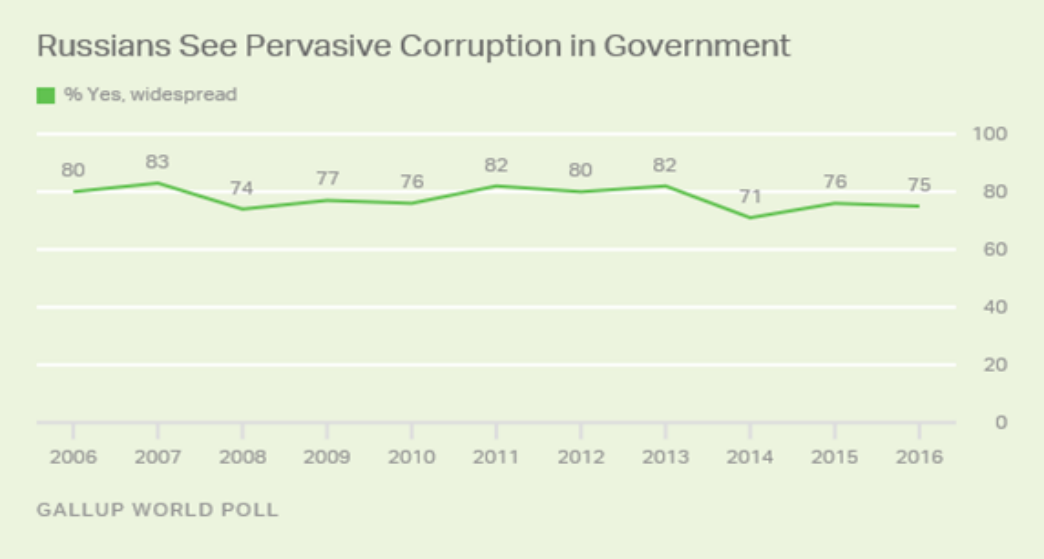


Figure 5: Russian's Awareness of Corruption (adopted from Gallup World Poll)

[11] According to Transparency International (2017), Corruption Perceptions Index in Russia is stable over time and Russia occupied 131st position among 176 states, meaning that corruption is endemic and people encounter it on a daily basis.

All in all, if the Olympic Games still to an extent pursued the 'politics of attraction' (Grix and Lee, 2013, p.6), the ensuing 2019 Winter Universiade in Krasnoyarsk, World Festival of Youth and Students 2017, where sport played a big role, and the FIFA WC 2018 with attendant spatial governance are indisputably regime legitimisation projects and are automatically a part of Putin's re-election strategy. Putin's stakes in the Sochi Olympics became transparent when he appeared at the IOC session in 2007, where the decision was taken. One of the interviewees (Int6, 02:44) also indicated this occasion as a moment when the domestic audience finally came to the forefront:

> Gradually [Putin] switched attention to the domestic audience in his statements about Sochi. It was personally very important to him. He personally went to Guatemala where the decision to give us the Olympics was taken, which is not a very typical situation. Presidents do not normally go to such events and according to the Olympic Charter the National Olympic Committees are separate from the governments and independent in their decisions.

It warrants a particular mention that Putin's personal endorsement of the Olympics was not only prudent to ensure the IOC's buy-in, but was also a major factor 'in gaining the broad support of the Russian people' (Sochi Report, p.39). Therefore, 'the professional approach to media relations and the high quality of information services' (Sochi Report, p.13) or simply a massive propaganda campaign vouched for the positive perception of the Games and thus legitimised the government's policies. Moreover, from the outset it was deemed essential not only to project SP via the Games, but also to inform the domestic audience what it actually meant in the Sochi Olympics' case. As a result, the Russian Olympic bid SP proposition/strategy when legitimised in front of the domestic population was as follows (Sochi Report, p.38):

> [T]he bid would be a strong tool to enhance the image of Russia internationally:
>
> Selection as the host city would raise the overall global profile of the Sochi region and this international image would be of national benefit;

> The Olympic Winter Games would enable Russia to demonstrate its achievements and recent development in the economic, cultural and sports spheres to the rest of the world

At the same time, the tag-line of the national campaign 'Together we will win' made implicit the need for the consolidation of the population around the President; it legitimatised the regime's policies by promising one of the most coveted Russian values, namely victories. Noteworthy here is the fact that Putin's political preoccupation with sport significantly originated from the central feature of his early credibility, namely his fit and active image that gave people hope for a brighter future. As Int2 (26:00) opined:

> [One of the crucial factors that defined Putin's popularity] was a contrast between crumbling, dysfunctional Yeltsin… well, take a look at a TV footage of Yeltsin of 1998, this was a mannequin. Putin was a stark contrast – he was young, handsome, an athlete with aggressive rhetoric.

It comes as no surprise then that Putin has had a vested interest in sport not simply as a way of building a healthy nation, but primarily as an investment in his political capital. The comment of the next interviewee (Int4, 27:18) indicates an almost unanimous attitude towards Putin in elite sports:

> The prestige of sports did not fall [despite the devaluation of other industries]. The most visible indication is the performance of our team, both in Atlanta and in Sydney. So it didn't fall. Whereas in the aftermath of the Sydney Olympics the financing was improved substantially. I felt it personally because I was in the highest echelons of the sports hierarchy and I know the level of financing in the 90s, for the Atlanta and then Sydney Olympics and afterwards. Therefore, all representatives of the sports sphere, no matter how others criticise Putin, all sports people are grateful to him because he preserved Russian sports and elevated it to such a level. How bad he is in the other spheres doesn't matter much for us, I worked in sports I think that it was precisely because of him that Russian sports survived and has been showing such impressive results.

Instrumental here is that, as a legitimisation tool, the government chose a replication of the last successful project of the Soviet era: the Moscow'80 Olympics. It then broadly utilised sport, the most innocuous and compelling method, to stir up the public into a great power patriotic mood. As such, sport and the Olympics as a major *fizkultura* festival, rather than

signalling Russia's subscription to the modern rules of the visibility game, indicate the elite's endeavour to build a new Russian tradition on the aesthetics and rituals of Soviet classical antiquity (by introducing the GTO complex and hosting flamboyant sports events Putin drew from the 1930s, which was a period of the Soviet classicism), in addition to appropriating, for example, Christianity as a spiritual canon. The next interview excerpt illustrates this issue:

> The Soviet sport is such a unique construct which is never publicly criticised. It remains our everything - an uncontested symbol and attainment. The Soviet Union was a sports great power, the victories and records followed one another nonstop. This what the Moscow'80 Olympics symbolise. Despite the boycott and all the intrigues we pulled it off. And maybe for the current leadership this was an important factor that in 1980 it was a success and they wanted to repeat such a success.

As previously established in this thesis, the Olympic legitimisation effect should be evaluated in symbiosis with the Crimean effect and judged separately from other developments. The next respondent confirms this point (Int2, 22:33):

> Because a sports triumph there and the Crimean affair became closely intertwined and symbolise what is thought to be Russia's comeback. The rhetoric is that Russia is rising from its knees and stands tall. Well, it wasn't bent it was just tying its shoelaces. It is to no avail therefore to try to separate the effect of the Olympics and the Crimean affair here. Accordingly, the popularity of Putin has soared and this rise was comparable to his first two tenures when he was incredibly popular and it was pure people's love.

In view of this, the most important legacy of these two events as observed by one of the respondents (Int7, 33:56) is 'the positive effect that will last and cushion all negative developments', thus upholding the system's stability and the temporary unquestionable legitimacy of the government. To support this argument, Putin's approval rates peaked in 2015 after he added the Syrian anti-terrorist operation to his list of credentials, and reached 89.1 per cent ('Putin's Rating Reaches All-Time High', October 22, 2015, wciom.ru). In 2017, 34 per cent of respondents of the Levada Centre named Putin the greatest person of all time next only to Stalin, who received 38 per cent ('Prominent Personalities', June 26, 2017,

levada.ru), 66 per cent wanted him to win the 2018 Presidential elections (‘President 2018’, July 5, 2017, levada.ru), and Putin’s personal approval rates totalled 84 per cent in 2017 (‘February Approval and Trust Ratings’, February 22, 2017, www.levada.ru) (also see Figure 6).

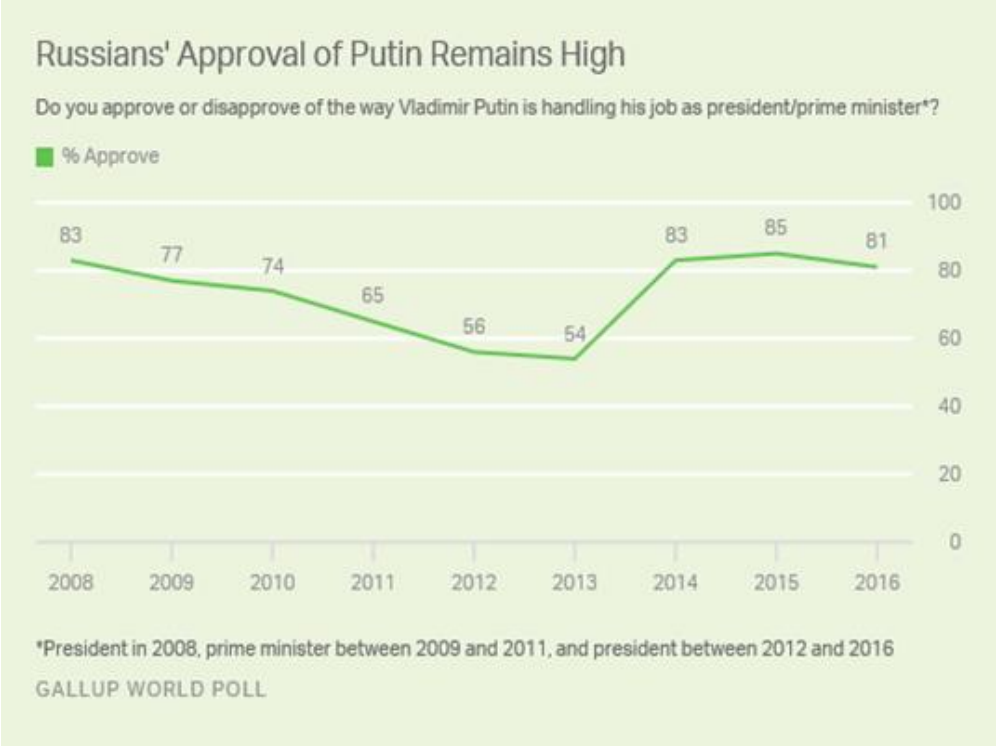


Figure 6: Putin Approval Rates since Russia was awarded the Sochi Olympics (adopted from the Gallup World Poll).

9.2.5 The New Russian Person

One of the most significant findings to emerge from this research was the unprecedented transformative impact of the Sochi Olympics on Russians’ collective identification as well as the unique effect on an individual. This phenomenon, although atypical for the Western observer, is not new for Russia as it builds on the tradition not only of the Moscow Olympics but even much earlier events, such as the 1957 World Festival of Youth and Students and the 1928 Spartakiad. What these three events have in common is that they brought a hitherto unseen number of different nationalities to a strictly monitored closed society. An influx of

foreigners from that time onwards became associated with celebration, happiness and, most importantly, freedom for the people, who lived under lock and key from the outside world. Although the Soviet Union is no more and Russia is open, it remains no less enigmatic to the world, whilst foreigners are no less fascinating to Russians. Given that national stereotypes are exceptionally persistent, the world at large is, if not discriminatory, then certainly not ecstatic about Russia. In view of the above, Russia is not amongst the most popular tourist destinations; the Olympics has become an interaction point of the highest intensity for Russia so far and, as a result, embody the biggest two-way PD venue.

The point made here is that, in addition to their significant potential to contribute to an informed understanding of the Russian character and soul by stripping them of several stereotypes, the most important achievement of the Olympics in terms of their legacy according to the respondents, is that they helped the nation to make a move in overcoming a lingering inferiority complex. This reveals an interesting dichotomy in the Russian collective psyche. Despite indicating that apart from sport the only construct or idea 'that cuts across political views, social status and religion and gives a sense of belonging to the Russian nation, is a juxtaposition of Us and the West; the belief that our foreign policy is justified and righteous' (Int3, 26:45), Russian people badly long for approval and confirmation from the West.

The intention here, in this respect, is to show that Hopf's view (2010) that the West as Russia's 'aspirational Other' has been supplanted by the West as its 'dissociative Other' misses significant subtleties in Russia's treatment of the West. Whilst Russia despises what it sees as unfounded Western criticism and goes on the defensive, which was the case in the aftermath of the Sochi Olympics and which, in turn, spurs an exclusivity and self-sufficiency discourse, it still desires the West's recognition and to a great extent attempts to emulate it.

Basically, in all it does, Russia mostly follows the rules laid out by the West and tries to bring the responsibilities it took upon itself to perfection. Therefore, whereas all the respondents emphasised the importance of showing 'how good we are in every aspect' (Int6, 22:48) and 'that we are good people and … not as bad as what is being said about us, as we are portrayed in the media' (Int4, 01:55), one of them grasped the whole gist of the Games for the Russians as well as how this national peculiarity was played out by the leadership to justify the Olympics:

> It's not even that we needed [the Olympics] - we needed to show the world… I think many Russians have a certain inferiority complex, that we are undervalued in Europe and in the USA. We are strong but they think that they are stronger. Therefore, the Olympics played on these feeling. Yet in sports we are the best. We could live to our most daring promises. And Putin repeated continuously that although there were concerns that we would be ready in time, we would show everyone what we are capable of. This rhetoric was predominant when he addressed the local audience (Int3, 14:03).

Another interviewee, whilst indicating the heterogeneous make-up of the international audience and thus the futility of trying to appeal to all, once again emphasised the pre-eminence of the locals and significantly shed light on the logic behind the Soviet-Russian habit of attributing profound attention to the international media's evaluation of the Games. As it emerges, even positive statements about Russia have more validity and appear more trustworthy when they come directly from the West, which again points to the meaning of the verification effect of the West:

> Addressing the international audience was important because in the end it influences the Russians. The main media channels are being controlled in Russia, the main content is defined from above. Accordingly, it is one thing when we are being told that we are the best, everything is perfect, and we are being feared. It works, but it is not as convincing as, for example, when we are told that the whole world is mesmerised by how Russia organised the Olympics, how friendly, hospitable and open we are, how impeccable and precise everything was. I think it is a very shrewd strategy (Int2, 04:50).

All of the above and the emotional feedback that Russians received during the Olympics, keeping in mind the centrality of the acclaim from important others for positive self-identification or what Luo described as the 'need [of] approval from others before [the nation] can approve of themselves' (2010, p.779), had a direct bearing on 73 per cent of the population identifying Russia as a free country by the end of 2014 ('Attitudes to Russia in the World: Opinions of Russians', January 16, 2015, fom.ru). This figure represents a 19 per cent increase from 2012 and, more tellingly, a 13 per cent increase from the poll conducted when the Olympics opened (ibid). Moreover, if in 2012 the number of people who thought that Russia was an advanced country (45 per cent) and those who thought that Russia was a laggard was relatively equal, then 2014 signalled a dramatic shift in public opinion. Although the multiple effects of the Olympics and the Crimean incorporation are deservedly viewed as inseparable now, it is highly likely to be a separate effect of the Olympic Games that 69 per cent of the population, according to the survey conducted by Public Opinion Foundation nine months after the event, viewed Russia as a developed and progressive country (ibid). The pomp of the Olympics also appears to be the major factor that persuaded 66 per cent of the population, a 15 per cent increase compared to 2012, that they lived in a rich country (ibid).

Interaction with the global community in general, and contact with the representatives of the West and its overall approval in particular through the Games, in terms of the collective Russian psyche are thought to have left a transformative imprint on the Russian individual, thereby contributing to the creation of a certain New Russian Person. Like the impressions of the Moscow Olympics, namely unparalleled openness and unequalled happiness and what one of the respondents (Int13) called 'a scent of the future', became the central formative memories for a whole generation in the 1980s, so are the Sochi Olympics and the 2018 FIFA WC expected to become seminal episodes for the generation of the 2010s, in the process

inscribing Putin into the collective memory as a father of the nation through an analogy with the early twentieth century. It is interesting to note that notwithstanding the joy from welcoming the world and being able to 'say 'Now you will finally see what we really are!'' (Int4, 36:40), a feeling of happiness and freedom during the Soviet era was associated / conditioned to a significant degree with / by the miraculous access to *defitsit* (rarely available deficit goods) and to the trappings of the Western lifestyle. A recollection by the next interviewee vividly illustrates this paradox in the Soviet person's system of meaning at the time:

> I bought my first ever colour TV set and enjoyed it a lot. I bought for the first time ever canned beer, and '*servelat*' (saveloy) became available in the food stores. There was also Coca-Cola and Fanta. We saw them for the first time during the Moscow Olympics. First time in our lives! Can you imagine what it was?! I bought canned beer and several sticks of *servelat* and it was pure happiness! You can't imagine. This is what our life was then (Int4, 34:00).

This opening up of the country, which blew off some steam, became a certain psychological vent. However, by no means did this diminish the fact that the Soviet people, quite like the Russians in context with the Sochi Games, wanted to become equal to themselves, reaching their aspirational selves, and taking the most from the opportunity to learn from the best. One of the respondents (Int6, 19:36) explained, for example, that in the run up to the Moscow Games due to the initial 'problem with training of the service employees, particularly in what regards their language skills, a great deal of highly paid interpreters was employed'. 'Close cooperation with the other countries what regards security, for example', as well as 'contracts with Coca-Cola, IBM and others' not only 'provided the high level of the organisation' but accounted for the tangible skills improvement and technological savvy of the many people involved in organisation of the Olympics.

It is in line with this logic that the next interviewee saw the main legacy of the Sochi Olympics as an effect 'on ordinary people who don't do sports, on common citizens' (Int12, 35:53). Whilst he also expressed the idea that 'a Russian person thinks that we are being misunderstood in the West; the West doesn't know us enough', it was the influx of foreigners – 'not so much a sports event itself but an opportunity for communication, a chance to see other people, other cultures' – that he believed to have 'a major impact on our youth, on the development of a new type of person, the New Russian Person'. Regrettably, it seems that this New Person, a representative of the generation that Putin (Address 2016) sees as a 'reliable, solid foundation for Russia in the turbulent and difficult 21st century… a generation capable not only of responding to the challenges of time but of taking part on equal terms in the formation of the intellectual, technological and cultural global development agenda', might internalise what appears to be a renewed confrontation with the West, which is doubly unfortunate as this was not among the legacies that the Russian elite envisaged from the Olympics.

The idea of a Hero of Our Time – a hypothetical person, who represents a distilled, concentrated image of the vices and virtues of the epoch, a certain ideal type inspiring a generation – originates from the eponymous novel of Mikhail Lermontov written in 1839 (by coincidence only six years after Count Uvarov formulated the orthodoxy, autocracy, nationality principles, which became in effect Russia's first ideological doctrine from the 16th century). These principles are also the bedrock of Putin's idea of sovereign democracy (see chapter 4 section 2 and chapter 7 section 5). Whilst the Russian political elite is not in possession of the mechanisms of social engineering comparable to those available to their predecessors in the 1920s and 1930s when the New Soviet Person, and, as it were, a Hero of Soviet Time, was fashioned, the scale of government attention to sport should have some

effect on the formation of the system of values of the young people as well as producing some popular role models. This happens at a time when the population seems to be particularly receptive or even craving moral authorities, with 84 per cent indicating such a need in 2014. 43 per cent of this impressive figure recognised the need for a role model: someone who would set a positive example, 'become a beacon for aspiration' and 'direct one to light instead of darkness' ('Moral Authorities', September 24, 2014, fom.ru). Accordingly, such 'activities aimed to enhance respect of citizens to Russia's national symbols and outstanding Russians' as 'events to commemorate the 120th birthday anniversary of the Marshall of the Soviet Union, four times Hero of the Soviet Union, Georgy Zhukov' in 2016, 'events to commemorate the 100th birthday anniversary of Hero of the Socialist Labour, Hero of Russia, Lieutenant General Mikhail Kalashnikov' in 2019, as well as the annual All-Russian youth convent 'Heroes of Our Time' (Patriotic Education Programme 2016-2020, Supplement №1, p.10-12) are but a few examples of the state's efforts to satisfy this popular demand for role models and to control public consciousness in the process. As for the prestige of particular professions, this seems to be determined equally by the values prevalent in the society and the government's endorsement of them. All the interviewees, in this respect, were unanimous that 'sport heroes offer a good template for a Hero of Our Time' (Int8, 54:06). Moreover, Int1 (31:38), whilst not accurately informed about the public perception of this image, asserted 'that a type of an athlete-hero, persevering through the hardships and overcoming himself is being constructed; an image of an athlete is, indeed, being added to the official ideal type discourse'. 'There is a certain glorification of a naïve, not [entirely] motivated by profit athlete, who follows his dream, has certain pure values' (Int4, 31:23) and, respectively, embodies the qualities associated with sport such as selflessness, dedication, tenacity, fortitude, idealism and, most importantly, patriotism. It is also noteworthy that, according to

the survey conducted by the Public Opinion Foundation in 2016, only 16 per cent of Russians think that a country's success in sport is conditioned by the sport development strategy and the popularity of a healthy lifestyle. By contrast, the majority (28 per cent) attributed success to the personal qualities of athletes, such as tenacity, motivation, and patriotism ('About Development of Professional Sport', August 24, 2016, fom.ru). This exceedingly idealised type, as a result, is offered as an alternative to the image of a ruthless mobster and an unscrupulous businessman, epitomising a cult of easy money and abused power, endemically popular and romanticised in the 1990s: 'a period which is thankfully gone' (Int4, 31:14). Regarding the disciplines most likely to produce heroes, the respondents pointed out 'ice hockey as it is particularly loved in Russia' (Int6, 17:09). They indicated that national heroes could also potentially come from biathlons, figure skating ('taking into account Peskov's marriage' Int1, 32:32) and gymnastics, but questionably from football, because 'although is the most popular sport we are not as successful in it' (Int1, 32:14). Such a prediction is supported by the statistics, which indicate that football, ice hockey, ice skating, and biathlons were indeed the most popular spectator sports in Russia in 2016, with gymnastics taking the sixth place after boxing ('Sport Interest', August 25, 2016, fom.ru).

An athlete as an ideal type is not without its contradictions. Two ambivalences are apparent here. Firstly, as emphasised by Int6 (54:16), 'professional sport includes doping, injuries, and inhuman workouts, excessive partying, which football players are particularly famous for'; accordingly, 'elite sport seems to be miles apart from the modern virtues, which include a happy family, a healthy lifestyle, some self-restrictions in alcohol consumption, for example'. Therefore, an elite athlete is not always synonymous with a healthy lifestyle and his or her image is not entirely propitious for the 'formation and development of the healthy lifestyle values', declared by Putin (Address 2010) a strategic priority of the children's welfare policy.

In reality, however, only 2 per cent of the population, according to Public Opinion Foundation survey from 2016, saw doping as a negative side of a professional athlete's career, whereas 7 per cent saw it as extremely hard physical labour and 32 per cent admitted that it harms the health ('About the Profession of Athlete', August 31, 2016, fom.ru). Although the Russian people very pragmatically saw a high income as the main benefit of being a successful athlete, 13 per cent still considered athletes to be strong and healthy people leading virtuous lifestyles, whilst 5 per cent underlined the role of sport in building a strong character, instilling discipline and hard work; 9 per cent pointed out the role of athletes in maintaining the prestige of the state (ibid). Secondly, as one of the interviewees noted (Int2, 52:29), although 'there is, indeed, an ideal type being formed of a successful young man who necessarily loves sport; he doesn't have to be an elite athlete but has to practice sports', he tails in popularity incomparably behind a far more prosaic government official. This trend is also evidenced by the statistics, with the majority of the population choosing politicians as their role models in 2014. Putin predictably became an incontestable leader with 36 per cent and the Foreign Minister Lavrov was seen as a moral authority by 6 per cent of Russians ('Moral Authorities', September 24, 2014, fom.ru). In this respect, another interviewee, whilst finding a politician as a role model to be somewhat more honourable than a mobster, considered it also sad 'because it is a sign that a person doesn't see career opportunities in other spheres' (Int3, 47:53). She further lamented that even volunteering during the sports events is seen as 'a social opportunity, a social lift, [as] an opportunity to get into the government structures, [which] are a symbol of stability and reliability'. A successful athletic career also means a fast-track pass into the government: it 'gives an unofficial admission into political elite [and, accordingly], former elite athletes are often choosing a political career' (Int1, 32:40).

However, this was seen negatively by 42 per cent of the population in 2016 ('About the Profession of Athlete', August 31, 2016, fom.ru).

Another paradox comes to the surface in this context. That is, whereas an athlete might not necessarily become a politician, a successful future-oriented politician in Russia is hardly possible without an athletic identity. These rules of the game were laid out by Putin himself, regarded by the majority to be the epitome of the Hero of Our Time concept, a significant part of whose identity is 'a keen athlete [who] regularly appears in kimono' (Int2, 42:40). Int3 (50:35), in this respect, by giving an example of the head of Tatarstan, who plays hockey and previously took part in the Paris-Dakar rally, also underlined that 'people in the government structures have to go to great lengths to support their sports identity'. It is also noteworthy that according to the Public Opinion Foundation survey in 2014, the two most prominent moral authorities from sport became a three-time Olympic gold medallist Vladislav Tretiak, and a heavyweight mixed martial artist Fedor Emelianenko – successful athletes, who pursued a no less successful career in politics as members of the United Russia party, a party of power. Among the role models from sport were a boxer Kostya Tszyu, a head coach of the Russian national rhythmic gymnastics team Irina Viner, a figure skater Evgeni Plushenko, and a footballer Andrey Arshavin ('Moral Authorities', September 24, 2014, fom.ru). As regards sport as a career option, notwithstanding all the ambiguities discussed, in 2016, 51 per cent of Russians still wanted to see their offspring pursuing a career in professional sport ('About the Profession of Athlete', August 31, 2016, fom.ru).

Apart from an ideal type promoted in the official discourse and a popular type, there is also a sort of a convenient type, an ideal citizen, sought by the incumbent political elite. This type represents a hybrid of the former two and is in essence 'a patriot who loves Putin … who does everything he is being told and believes in everything he is being told. Anybody who

questions the official rhetoric, the official course is not an ideal citizen' (Int1, 29:32). According to the more formal text of the Patriotic Education Programme 2016 to 2020 (p.5), a true patriot is the one who has 'a high civic responsibility for the fate of the country and a strong feeling of involvement in the great history and culture of Russia; a citizen, who understands the continuity of generations, loves his/her Motherland and possesses a proactive attitude in life'. As a result, youth policy with and an increased emphasis on *fizkultura* and sport as it is envisaged by Putin 'is not a range of services but, first of all, a space for development of a moral harmonious individual, a responsible Russian citizen' (Address 2012). The massive involvement of the young generation in sport, or what Int8 (50:08) characterised as the 'sportisation of youth', has the potential to satisfy this demand for both obedience and patriotism, because, according to the President, 'it is exactly during this age, as we know, that habits and interests for the rest of life are developed, and we should be proactive in forming them' (Address 2012). On the other hand, the promotion of mass sport participation amongst the youth is not simply a shrewd co-option strategy, but rather the realisation of a fundamental principle of an education system. It is thus a condition of the 'Russia's [future] success, which lies in unleashing the talents of [each child] in science, art, sport, profession and life' (Address 2016).

Putin becoming the biggest ambassador of sport in Russia, in turn, stems not only from his passionate love of it but is also determined by what he sees as a 'need to set personal example to help our society to overcome infantilism in questions of a healthy lifestyle' in view of '80 per cent of citizens not practicing *fizkultura* and sport' according to the statistics from 2010 (Address 2010). The consensus amongst the interviewees was that, although it is hard to accurately trace the dynamics of youth consciousness formation, there are, indeed, several significant changes for the better, not least through participation in sport. Int 2 (50:11), in this

respect, also found the current top-down strategy with mandatory *fizkultura* and the semi-voluntary nature of the GTO complex to be 'the right approach to increase the sportisation and health of the nation', because after an individual exits the confines of state structures such as school, university and the army, *fizkultura* more often than not becomes of secondary importance to him or her. Accordingly, Int2 concluded that the youth is 'a target audience of this whole sports affair [because it is] the group which the easiest to mobilise and to control'. In addition to Putin's personal example and encouragement of sport participation in state institutions, there are two more components of this strategy of 'institutionalising' a healthy lifestyle: media and cinema. These are tasked with making '[Russian] citizens, who achieved outstanding results in sport' familiar to society and, most importantly, there are SMEs, which are meant to 'encourage people to do sports, make *fizkultura* and sport a fashionable and prestigious occupation' (Address 2012). Such an approach to mass sport popularisation also gained the support of 58 per cent of population in 2016, according to the Public Opinion Foundation ('About Development of Professional Sport', August 24, 2016, fom.ru), with 22 per cent claiming that sport is the health of the nation and 15 per cent sharing the opinion that great athletes come from mass sport.

9.3 Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of this thesis, which indicate that the Russian leadership uses sport and SMEs predominantly for the multifaceted nation-building purposes. Examined through the prism of the sports system, much broader issues of governance and general social dynamics begin to unfold. The elite's preoccupation with sports development has risen exponentially since 2000 when Putin assumed power. Thus, if the importance of sport and SMEs could be deduced statistically from the number of times they are mentioned in the

Presidential Annual Address to the Federal Assembly, they have become 13.6 times more salient between 2008 and 2016 than they were during Putin's first two tenures. No other industry or sphere in Russia has experienced such a discursive growth. This clearly points out that sport has a strategic significance that by far supersedes the recreational faculties and the feel-good-effect from victories. Neither is its importance limited to increased stature from medalling in international events or hosting them. Domestic SP effects sport produces, as was shown in this chapter, could be broadly summed up as national consolidation, mobilisation, regime legitimisation, and patriotism stimulation. The elites, in turn, efficaciously leverage an all-embracing patriotism to lay ground to the new national narrative and what appears to be a new type of person – the New Russian Person.

It is particularly by carefully scrutinising sport and SMEs in Russia that one sees that local people unlike materialistically disposed societies in the West are still predominantly content with consuming the intangibles. At present, the leadership appears to take a full advantage of the fact that in Russia SMEs and major sports victories put people into a sort of transcendental state, give not simply a sense of co-ownership and of a personal achievement but foster a sense of unity and common purpose with the political elites. This is significant because such an emotional exuberance trigged by sport puts a cap on actual needs of the population as well as softens societal demands from the state. Russia, thus, proves its historical propensity to be satisfied with 'circuses' whilst forgoing its need for 'bread'. But above all else, this confirms that Russia is still a country of a collective mentality which represents a stark contrast with the Western societies. Not only does this mean that the government efforts to re-weave the fabric of nationhood and recover identity take root and prosper but that Russia obviously regains a great power consciousness. In this respect, the fact that 80 per cent of the population in Russia supported the idea of the Sochi Olympics (Sochi Report, 2014) proves that the

Games were not simply a reputational whim of the elites but, indeed, enjoyed broad popular approval.

Noteworthy, the change of the slogan of the Olympic promotional campaign from 'Gateway to the Future' into 'Together We Will Win' (ibid, p.39) clearly illustrates that victory is more coveted and comprehensible for Russians than the concept of the future. It does not necessarily imply that Russian identity project is archaic; rather that it is worlds apart with what resonates in the West. The Russian leadership definitely understands that and, as evident from the slogan alone, wants Russia to be different things to its own and foreign publics. As a result, similar to the domestic Olympic campaign, Russian semi-official national narrative seems to hinge on three principles: it is uniting and patriotic; demonstrates the importance of everyone's contribution to the collective success and focuses on winning.

This research, however, uncovered an interesting paradox. As indicated by one the interviewees, the Moscow Olympics retain such a special place in the Russian collective memory because they sort of gave people 'the scent of future', not least because of the opportunity to mingle with the foreign visitors and see some trappings of the Western lifestyle. Therefore, although deliberately erased in favour of victory from the domestic Olympic campaign, the concept of the future appears to be no less appealing for Russians. This may be because, despite the elites' claims about the idiosyncratic nature of the Russian soul and national character, Russians might, in the end, prove to be not that much different from, as ironic as it might sound, people in the West. This is important because even though official relations between Russia and the West remain clouded for now, there is obviously some room for people-to-people PD and reciprocal civil society initiatives.

As this chapter demonstrated, SMEs and sport, especially the re-introduction of the GTO standards and Soviet-style competitions and mass pursuits attest, to the fact that both the state and the nation are equally longing for the continuity of tradition. Having received freedom in the 1990s but deprived of purpose and, how most, but by no means, all, in Russia think robbed of its dignity, in the first two decades of the century Russia was grappling for roots and meaning wherever it could find them. Even if it meant sacrificing personal freedom in the process. This mentality in the first place is symptomatic of why Russia will continue to be puzzling and enigmatic to the Western publics – that is as long as its people favour an elusive, transcendental feeling of 'greatness' over concrete general welfare.

This thesis made an effort to understand how the leadership implements its agenda through sport and SMEs. This national project, however, is hardly limited to sport and requires the further thorough attention of both sociologists and IR theorists. From the sociological perspective, for example, it would be worthwhile to address how a collective and an individual in Russia have evolved since the collapse of the Soviet Union and how they fare in comparison with other societies. For the IR scholars, it would certainly be interesting to explore whether this rediscovered consciousness entails an imperial outlook and, thus, the politics of confrontation with the West could gain further momentum. Whilst the previous chapters have discussed the significance of the West for Russia's positive self-identification from the IR perspective, this one established that the Russian public follows predominantly the same route as the elites. In many ways feeling superior to the Western societies (certainly not in terms of the living standards) Russians still require their approval and recognition in their perennial struggle against their own insecurities and inferiority complexes. This validation comes not only from interaction with the foreign publics and a feel-good effect it produces. It also stems from a confirmation that Russia can do what the West does, such as

host an SME, and to the same standard. Importance of the West for Russian identity means that sport will continue to be treated as an issue of strategic significance because it is but one area where first the USSR and now Russia fare positively against the Western states. The next chapter addresses in detail Russia's external Olympic-specific SP and discusses the essence of Russia's sports diplomacy in the 21st century.

CHAPTER 10: RUSSIA'S OLYMPIC SOFT POWER STRATEGY AND SPORTS DIPLOMACY

10.1 Russia's Olympic Soft Power Strategy

Considering Russia's understanding of SP as well as its particular take on it, namely the perfectly synced and highly efficacious promotion of its domestic dimension, was discussed at length in chapters 7, 8 and 9, this chapter concentrates entirely on the actual aspects and components of Russia's externally oriented Olympic SP strategy. Having addressed the effectiveness of the Sochi Olympics and, more broadly, of the existing sport and *fizkultura* systems in furthering the ruling elite's objectives vis-à-vis the domestic population, in this chapter the author makes an effort to establish the main predicaments, apart from the obvious Crimea factor and Russia's involvement in the Ukrainian conflict, to Russia positively changing its image in the world. Whilst the previous parts of the thesis discussed what Russia's elite views as the main sources of national pride, which it considers by default to be its main SP assets, they also analysed why Russia subscribes to SP discourse. In this chapter, inspired by the work of Grix and Brannagan (2016), who showed how Germany effectively acquired SP through hosting the 2006 FIFA WC and what Qatar does to replicate its success in 2022, the author endeavours to offer a similar analysis of the concrete components and stages of Russia's Olympic SP strategy and its broader sports diplomacy. To maintain consistency and clarity, the Olympic SP strategy is evaluated in four stages. The chronology of the Olympic SP strategy, based on the timeline adopted in the official documents (Sochi Report, 2014), consequently is as follows:

1. Bid stage
2. Olympic preparation stage
3. Olympic hosting stage

4. Olympic leveraging stage

Although there are several similarities across the stages, there is a need to review the differences. It has to be noted that the bid stage itself and the massive international promotional campaign, as well as Putin's personal involvement, ensured Russia's global visibility and provided an SP boost on its own. At this stage, the communications campaign successfully dealt with the low international profile of Sochi and allayed the IOC's fears and concerns about Sochi's suitability as a host, which were based on a general negative perception of post-Soviet Russia. The context and objectives of the bid, as a result, were as follows:

> Since 1991, Russia had undergone tumultuous economic and societal changes and many misconceptions about the country were prevalent abroad. The perception of limitless funds focused on "buying" the Games was one that the communications plan had to address as well as the image of crumbling, post-Soviet era infrastructure challenges for the Games (Sochi Report, p.42).

These objectives were successfully achieved with the aid of professional communication, a high technical level of information, and a high-profile enthusiastic team. In addition to highlighting the technical and infrastructural characteristics of Sochi as a host, the SP component of the bid included 'putting Sochi on the world map' (Sochi Report, p.43) and building a favourable image of Russia by spreading reliable positive information. Correspondingly, the international bid promotional campaign 'Gateway to the Future' pointed to a technically superior Games and implicitly underlined Russia's commitment to modernity and development.

Multi-Phased International Relations Campaign			
Stages	**Goals**	**Mechanisms**	**Events**
PHASE 1 "BUILD AWARENESS" – LAUNCH OF THE BID TO 1 OCTOBER 2006	Communicate the professionalism and sincerity of the bid	Diffusion of technical material to the media and Partners, servicing of media requests	Torino 2006 Olympic Winter Games, SportAccord
PHASE 2 "BUILD CREDIBILITY" – 1 OCTOBER 2006 – 10 JANUARY 2007	Establish reputation and send inspirational messages	Press releases, formal PR activities, interviews, distribution of press materials at international events	Sport for All Congress, Doha 2006 Asian Games, Olympic Council of Asia General Assembly
PHASE 3 "CREATE RELEVANCE" – 10 JANUARY 2007 – 15 JUNE 2007	Communicate inspiration and excitement	International road shows with the bid leadership attending meetings of several Olympic organisations	Asian Winter Games, IOC Evaluation Commission visit, ANOC/SportAccord, ONOC meeting, R IOC 2014 Evaluation Commission Report
PHASE 4 "ESTABLISH BONDING" – 15 JUNE 2007 – 4 JULY 2007	Communicate passion	Use of ambassadors to deliver Sochi's key messages on a more personal level	IOC Session in Guatemala City

Table 9: Multi-Phased Sochi Olympic Bid International Relations Campaign (Source: Sochi Report)

Below is the list of sports and non-sports events where Sochi as an Olympic host was promoted (Sochi Report, p.45):

- FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup
- IIHF 2007 World Championship
- European Union/Russia Summit, 25 May 2006
- Black Sea Economic Cooperation Meeting, 25-27 September 2006
- 5th Annual International Economic Forum Kuban–2006, September 2006
- The G8 Summit in St. Petersburg, July 2006

- IOC/Olympic family events
- Russian Winter Festival, Trafalgar Square, London, 12–13 January 2007
- 9th Russian Economic Forum, London, 23-25 April 2006

The year of the IOC choosing Sochi as an Olympic host marked a watershed moment in Russia's approach to PD and, by default, set the scene for a yet undeclared SP assault. The use of oxymoron here is not accidental, inasmuch as the official Olympic discourse was replete with militaristic metaphors. As became evident in course of interviews, the public, likewise, internalised such a framing. According to one respondent (Int9, 00:58), the Olympics and other major forums including sports are all part of a holistic strategy that lies in a geopolitical 'desire to flex our muscles in front of the watching world and to show that we can pull a mega-event off'. Although the respondents were quick to revoke attributing any militant or aggressive substance to the issues, their intuitive choice of words reveals a general (mis)comprehension of the SP concept in Russia. The next extract is instrumental here:

> I might have put it incorrectly. Of course it has nothing to do with any violence. It was just a figure of speech. The goal was to show our strength, that we are capable of hosting such events, live up to the high Olympic standards; that we can afford to invest that much money into the facilities construction. Power is power no matter how soft (Int3, 03:48).

Thus, the most common view was that sport is 'the epitome of strength [and prestige] of a nation' (Int12, 10:26), while the major function of the Olympics was a 'demonstration of Russian strength as a state to a global audience' (Int2, 01:27). The next interviewee elaborated on the techniques of enforcing the idea of the imperative nature of the Olympics on the public and importantly pinned down Russia's hard power attitude to SP, or simply the conflation of concepts:

> What was the message to us? We all read in the papers and saw on TV that for us it is very important politically. All the people understood it that it was really important for

> us to become an impeccable host of these Olympics. Make the world love us. It was not a secret. Everyone knew that. The idea was to make (a word used is *zastavit*, which means to force -author) the Western world love us. Not only the West. The whole world to fall in love with us, look at us, see us (Int4, 12:59).

The ambivalence of Russia's understanding of SP, as a result, seems to lie in the fact that even by the local audiences it is interpreted as a strategy of forced love. Viewed this way, Russia's Olympic SP effort, especially in the Russian elite's interpretation, might not be as futile as traditionally assumed. Indeed, the Olympic year that, however, became infamous for Russia's hard power moves, only contributed to the Russian people indicating a considerable self-consciousness regarding how they thought Russia would fare in the world in terms of its SP credentials ('Attitudes to Russia in the World: Opinions of Russians', January 16, 2015, fom.ru). Thus, by the end of 2014, only 36 per cent thought that there was a generally positive and unbiased attitude to Russia in the world, compared to 50 per cent who expressed optimism at the start of the Games (ibid). Yet, despite the Russian people being realistic about a gradual negative trend in international attitudes towards Russia, which according to the Public Opinion Foundation respondents reached its peak in 2014, the majority shared the opinion that Russia elevated its political stature in the Olympic year (ibid). Ironic as it might seem, Russia's actions in 2014, although it is highly unlikely that any of them apart from the Olympics were planned in advance, actually brought the Kremlin what it had been craving most: respect, fear, and perceived influence. Moreover, for Russians a growth of negative attitudes internationally, and this perfectly accords with the Russian conviction that fear breeds respect, had a rather positive correlation with their understanding of the named constructs. It also appeared for them to be the main indicator that Russia mattered in the international arena. To illustrate the point made here, by the end of 2014, around 68 per cent of those surveyed thought that Russia was respected and its influence was growing, whilst a staggering 86 per cent maintained that the world feared Russia (ibid). These figures indicate

not only a statistically significant increase amongst those who realise that Russia has turned into a serious concern for the West, but also represent a disturbing all-time high since 2007, the year when Russia was awarded the Olympics. Considering that Russia's major concern has always been to be strong and, more importantly, to be seen as such, it is not that this ran counter to what Russia wanted in earnest, however.

Moreover, notwithstanding the general tone of the Western press (the highly discrediting doping scandal had not broken at the time of the survey), the Russians appear to believe that the Olympics have had a positive impact on the state's image in the world. As a result, in 2014, the total number of Russians who thought that the world saw Russia as a free country had increased by 14 per cent since 2012 to 61 per cent. Likewise, there was also a record boost in the number of people who thought that Russia was seen as an advanced state (59 per cent), and who considered it as a rich state (77 per cent) (ibid).

Such a dramatic misinterpretation of SP and an odd understanding of what it takes to be liked in the world might be partially put down to Russia's late and largely mechanical appropriation of the concept. Philosophical considerations and other speculations aside, on a practical level, Russia first seriously embraced PD with the establishment of *Russkiy Mir* (Russian World) in 2007 (Presidential Decree from 21.07.2017), a principal foundation entrusted with the promotion of Russian language and culture abroad and the circulation of 'objective information about modern Russia, Russian compatriots and on that basis [formation of] a favourable public opinion about Russia' (russkiymir.ru). *Rossotrudnichestvo*, another PD agency, which pursues pretty much the same objectives and is equally accountable to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, was set up a year later (Presidential Decree from 06.09.2008 №1315, rs.gov.ru). The Olympics, in the same vein, were seen as 'an important element of foreign policy activities of the Russian Federation' or as one of Russia's

own effective ways to influence foreign audiences and 'ensure that the world has an objective image of the country' (Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation 2016, hereinafter 'Concept 2016'). On the surface, a major function of the Olympics thus partially chimes with the Information Support Objective of the Foreign Policy Concept 2013, 2016: 'delivering to the international community of unbiased information about Russia's perspective on key international issues, its foreign policy initiatives and efforts, processes and plans of its socioeconomic development and Russia's cultural and research achievements'.

Initially, however, the Sochi Olympics were couched not in SP terms, but rather exclusively as an image-building vehicle. The irony lies in the fact that while bidding and preparing for the biggest SP event in modern history, the Russian elite either did not take the concept seriously or did not know how to apply it appropriately. As a result, the international functions of the Olympics were stripped down to narrow image building and public relations, up until the point when SP became an official government strategy in 2013 when listed as one of the foreign policy priorities in the Foreign Policy Concept. This situation with foregone SP opportunities in context with the Olympics highlights a broader problem in Russia when policies follow concrete projects and initiatives, and not vice versa. Such an approach meant that the Olympic hosting did not envisage anything other than reinstating Russia's cultural attractiveness and projecting its infrastructural modernity, an initiative that took place in the context of the Cultural Olympiad launched in 2010 with the Year of Cinema and included the Year of Theatre (2011), the Year of Music (2012), and the Year of Museums (2013) (Sochi Report Vol. 2, p.31). The Olympic SP strategy, while spearheading Russia's magnificent culture, essentially passed up the potential to promote political values – assets, on the other hand, being far less likely to generate consensual admiration - and to prime its foreign policy agenda. The situation repeats itself with the FIFA 2018 WC. Whereas in Germany, for

example, the WC hosting strategy in 2006 ‘resulted in a long-term, carefully planned, co-ordinated, and implemented set of actions designed to change the national ‘‘image’’ amongst the foreign publics’ (Grix and Brannagan, 2016, p.262) and was so successful that some of its parts, such the branding campaign ‘Land of Ideas’, continue to this day (ibid, p.263), SMEs in Russia follow a different logic. Clearly being an urban regeneration catalyst, the WC, like the 2014 Sochi Games, is unlikely to bring Russia the full spectre of SP benefits, largely due to the elite’s lack of commitment to rectify image losses in the context of the Russia’s role in the Ukrainian crisis and a generally insufficient effort to capitalise on the WC run-up stage opportunities.

Soft power is understood in Russia as ‘an integral part of efforts to achieve foreign policy objectives’ (Concept 2013), which is brought about by information and communication and predominantly by the civil society initiatives. The Sochi Olympics and an unremitting string of major international sports events are thus espoused and revered by the Russian leadership as ‘the best forms of activities in [the soft power] area that … take into account both international experience and national peculiarities’ and as a consequence contribute to the ‘establish[ment of] Russia's positive image worthy of the high status of its culture, education, science, sports achievements, the level of civil society development’ (ibid). Regarding Russia’s activities in the SP sphere in view of the previously discussed domestic predicaments, the lack of attractive government institutions and a coherent development model predictably rely for the most part on culture and as specified by the Foreign Policy Concept 2016 are envisaged ‘to strengthen Russia’s role in international culture; promote and consolidate Russian language in the world; raise global awareness of Russian cultural achievements and national historical legacy, cultural identity of the peoples of Russia, and Russian education and research; consolidate the Russian-speaking diaspora’. Although

spearheading culture in the context of SMEs hosting is common, as indeed was also the case in Germany in 2006, Russia, as it appears, fails to perform the trick here. Whereas for Germany such high-profile and internationally visible initiatives it organised as, for example, 'a whistle-stop ''welcome tour'' for Franz Beckenbauer, the Committee's chair, to 31 countries that qualified for the tournament', 'greatly influenced the media coverage of the event positively' (Grix and Brannagan, 2016, p.263), the publicity Russia has been getting is mostly negative.

Russia's reclaimed civilisational and by default SP mission stems from and is a way to legitimise its own sovereign model of development as an alternative to Western self-righteous uncompromising political and moral dictates; it draws from a reservoir of conservative values. In a nutshell, it lies in the 'facilitation of the development of constructive dialogue and partnership with a view to promoting harmony [with an emphasis on religious] and mutual enrichment of various cultures and civilisations' (Address 2007). Dialogue, in turn, has to ensue with 'due regard for each state's national context, culture, history and values' (ibid). Subsequently, the whole Olympic pageant was part and parcel of the multiple-phased strategy of validating Russia's identity, both at home and abroad. Therefore, the prevalence of strength and power in the messaging could in fact be less about Russia's declaration of belligerent intent, and more about its personal geopolitical psychoanalysis. Political messages of the Olympics, hence, were as follows:

> The central facets of the national idea are that Russia is a strong and great country. There are efforts being made to build an image of a strong and successful, modernised country. The emphasis is on the idea that Russia is capable and entitled to take its own strategic decisions. This is an important element, which was lost in the 90s. The emphasis is on sovereignty and independence (Int1, 25:38).

Indeed, although the dominant visual memory of the Sochi Olympics was as an image of a bear, the fact that this time it was a sleeping one is layered with particular significance,

carrying, perhaps, the most important message of this Olympics. This connotation equally was not lost on the respondents:

> I think there is no escape from the Misha image. Yet the sleeping bear is not an aggressive bear. I think the idea was to take a step away from an aggressive image. When I spoke to my international colleagues they said, for example, that British English is sexy, whereas Russian for someone who doesn't speak it sounds aggressive. Even in the perception of the language there is a stereotype of aggression. Yes, I think this was the idea – to ameliorate our aggressive image (Int6, 09:39).

In view of that, Russia's appropriation of both a European identity and a sovereign 'cultural and spiritual identity', the idea of 'a common world for people of different nationalities and confessions' (Address 2007), as well as the advocacy of 'a culture of international relations based on the rule of international law – without enforcement of development models and forcing of natural flow of historical process' (Address 2007), represents Russia's SP proposition and was on show in Sochi.

Despite the fact that there is SP potential at every contact point of an individual with a country, much more so during the Olympics than on any other occasion, it is the Olympic ceremonies, which in a dramatic way convey a synthesised propitious version of a country, that have the most enduring and tractable SP impact. As a result, there was no shortage of references to Russia's contribution to Western civilisation through high culture; the language received its fair share of attention with an introduction to the Cyrillic alphabet, which simultaneously highlighted Russia's cultural, scientific and historical achievements. Although the cultural identity of Russia's nationalities was somewhat missing from the picture, the idea of harmony and the friendship of nations habitually had its place in the ceremony. The next insight shows that in contrast to a general ambiguity of the SP concept in Russia, the public is perfectly savvy about the dialectical subtleties of one of the chief tenets of Russia's attractiveness:

> I think a lot of attention was given to the friendship of nations, to the multicultural side of Russia. Yet it was not multiculturalism as it is understood in the West but the good old Soviet concept of the friendship of nations. The idea was to find a friendly face and to take a step away from the 'vodka, *balalaika*, and bear' stereotypes (Int6, 08:36).

Apart from relying on Russia's conventional strongholds regarding values, traditions and achievements, the elite acutely realises the exigency of embracing modernity and modernisation to be attractive. Whereas sports events as such have become the efficient drivers and prominent emblems of scattered modernisation in Putin's Russia, they are still viewed with a dose of scepticism by some. In a dramatic attempt to convert local audiences to its cause as well as to further charm the West, the Olympic ceremonies, once again through a shrewd method of underscoring historical continuity, advance the state's dedication to modernisation and progress. The next interviewee graphically illustrates the point:

> There was also a factory shown in the beginning of the ceremony with Nikita Michalkov[12] and a lady in high heels. This was a symbol of modern technology development. The message was that Russia is a modern, rapidly developing country, so there was a modernisation theme. However, I would agree that tradition was preeminent in the representation of Russia during the Olympics. Yet modernisation was a centrepiece of this representation even throughout the historical part of the ceremony. There was a modernisation angle to the whole ceremony. If we take a closer look, there were locomotives and Gagarin, a space theme and industrialisation (Int1, 24:17).

Addressing the criticisms of Russia's modernisation, which allegedly happens without any due regard to the environment and the people, quite in the inglorious traditions of the industrialisation, the popular issue of sustainable development also was not left unattended in the ceremonies. According to the interviewees (Int1, 23:26), 'the emphasis was on strong and modern, state-of-the-art Russia, which takes care of its ecology and nature'. By the same token, sustainable development, ecology protection, and technology should have signalled Russia's decisive orientation into the future.

[12] Famous Russian film director

To sum things up, this thesis suggests that the Sochi ceremonies as markers of Russia's identity and interests lend themselves to a more considerate and holistic analysis when evaluated as visual manifestations of 'civilisational identity' and from the vantage point of global competition accentuating 'cultural and civilisational diversity of the world' (Concept 2013).

Russia's Olympic hosting stage SP strategy, in addition to the ceremonies, which certainly were its zenith, also included 500 hours of performances by 5000 artists, some of whom were international stars. Like the ceremonies, the cultural programme aspired to 'showcase the main facets of Russian pride' (Sochi Report Vol.2, p.31). It is in line with this logic and possibly to make up for the conspicuous absence of cultural diversity during the opening ceremony, particularly unsettling for some foreign commentators, that this time, the main emphasis was on 'folk ensembles from the different regions of Russia' (ibid). Accordingly, whilst still leaving abundant room for classical high culture with numerous exhibitions, film screenings, literary readings, theatre and opera shows, the highlights included the Russian folk group 'Native tunes' and 'indigenous ethnic groups from northern Russia'; however, most importantly, there were representatives from the region, namely the Kuban Cossack Choir and ensembles from the North Caucasus (ibid).

Apart from the seamless hosting of international sports events, Russia aims at its team ranking first in the total number of medals won, which is set out by the Strategy (p.2), which likewise contains a profound SP potential:

> Winning of the highest sports awards – is one of the most preferred options for all the states to assert themselves internationally. High sports results –are a mirror of socioeconomic development of the state. Achievement of declared targets in sport requires mobilisation of the whole state potential, including economy, science, and human and resource capital. Sports victories promote development of a positive image of a state on the international arena.

Such a fixation on winning by any means, in addition to emphasising the elite's legitimisation tactics through a satisfaction of the Russian penchant for victories, points to the elite's essential misunderstanding of the SP concept. At the same time, it originates in Russia's protracted self-consciousness and inferiority complex regarding the West, which in turn is enthusiastically stirred up by the latter conventionally doubting the veracity and merit of whatever comes from Russia. As a result, as one respondent remarked:

> Sport has a very strong verification effect. It stands in the same line with Russian women, ballet, literature, art, architecture. Yet in all of the above mentioned the beauty is in the eye of the beholder, or they are the matter of personal taste. In sport, however, everything is objective. You came first – you are the best (Int2, 47:22).

Accordingly, although the Russian team in Sochi successfully finished first in the ranking, this was a victory craze, on the one hand, underscoring the ambivalence of Russian logic, and on the other hand it triggered a doping scandal, which resulted in a partial ban of the Russian team from Rio and the looming possibility of Russia missing the 2018 Winter Olympics. This certainly meant a serious blow to Russia's reputation and a setback to the overall credibility of its SP efforts. On balance, it seems that the Olympics historically prove to be a particularly coveted and yet a dangerous thing for Russia. The 'winning at all costs' syndrome, both in the geopolitical and sport playgrounds, activated in this context once again resulted in reputational damages eclipsing the actual wins, albeit not without timely and prudent external assistance. Regarding any representative evaluation of Russia's SP attractiveness, this is also challenging in view of the vicissitude of approaches to its measuring. Russia as it is now almost certainly hardly stands a chance of making it back into the reputable Monocle shortlist. Despite 'putting in the effort', which in this case most likely refers to the Olympics although this was not specified, according to the Monocle Soft Power Survey 2014/15 (monocle.com), Russia lost two positions taking 29th place and dropping out of the next ranking: above all due to Putin 'get[ting] in the way'. The double entendre of the selection did not preclude, for

example, China despite the fact that 'the message it is selling isn't always well received' and its overall top-down approach to SP from being in the list; neither did 'political problems [which] cast a shadow' become a predicament for Brazil moving up three positions in 2017 (monocle.com). Rapidly growing 'cultural institutions and diplomatic reach' suffice for China, whilst 'the successful Olympics and Paralympics … and of course, football' do what it takes to be an SP heavyweight for Brazil (ibid). Although a triad of BRICS members – India, China, and Brazil – are comfortably among the 2016/17 SP leaders, ranked 24, 20, 19 respectively, it would be a safe guess to assume that for Russia it would require something more extraordinary than hosting a string of SMEs, albeit very successful, to be included into the fold.

Conversely, the 2017 Emerging Markets Soft Power Index report, which analyses 'how much soft power Emerging Markets have relative to one another' and thus assumes a more level playing field as the sample under surveillance is more homogenous, ranked Russia first in 2014 and 2015 and second to China in 2017 (p.3). At the same time, Brazil and India, occupying honourable positions in the Monocle Survey, left the top ten altogether, not least because of being 'underperformers in the Olympics' (p.7). Downplaying the importance of global integrity variables, which include 'the rule law, freedom index, and voter turnout' (p.6), the report forefronts the global image category instead, which includes Olympic performance. Therefore:

> one of the reasons why Russia and China switch places … is because of their performances in the Olympic Games. If the final year under consideration were 2015, Russia would have taken first place, not China, because it won the most medals of any country in the 2014 Olympic Games. In 2016, in contrast, Russia came in fourth place, and in terms of a normalised variable score this meant its Olympic variable score was cut in half.

Although the survey maintains that 'while Russia is certainly criticised in some circles in the West and in countries that have antagonistic relations with Russia, its popularity has grown over the last several years compared to global opinions about the United States' (p.13), given the importance of the Olympic success for its methodology, emerging details about doping in Russia might still make it reconsider the country's previous ranking.

Similar to the 2017 Emerging Markets Soft Power Index report, Portland consultancy contended that 'for Western observers, Russia's move into the top 30 may raise some eyebrows' (The Soft Power 30 Report 2016, p.44); the firm nevertheless listed the country as 27th in its Soft Power 30 index in 2016 due to a marked improvement compared to the 2015 polls. The rationales for Russia's inclusion were its 'deep reserves of cultural soft power' and its leadership in fighting ISIS in Syria as well as the fact that the report is positioned as a 'global snapshot of soft power … not reflect[ing] a purely Western view' (ibid). In view of this, it comes as no surprise that such a positive evaluation of Russia's SP by Portland immediately led to 'questions on the utility of such findings' presented by 'a non-academic outfit tied to numerous authoritarian regimes – an outfit that has been engaged in questionable practices' and, what is more, to insinuations of Russia's presence in the ranking being conditioned by the fact that 'a company … was recently on the Kremlin's dole to help whitewash Moscow's global reputation' (Michel, *The Diplomat*, June 17, 2016).

This section has shown that whereas initially Russia saw the Sochi Olympics as a potent image building vehicle, its stakes have significantly metamorphosed well before the actual event and, as it appears, are much less due to the post-Olympic political circumstances traditionally held accountable for the readjustment of Russia's SP rhetoric and agenda. Although during the Olympics Russia was putting in an impressive effort to live up to its obligations and indeed speak to the world with a soft and gentle voice, these findings suggest

that this voice was coming significantly from the general public, from people such as volunteers for example, to whom these Olympics truly became a personal mission to show the very best of Russia and Russianness. In a way, thus, these Olympics, as with the 1980 Moscow Games previously, became a genuine PD venue, firstly in that Russian people were indescribably passionate about playing host to the world and secondly, because they experienced the feeling of finally belonging to the global community. This is why tourists who actually visited Russia during the Games and attended the competitions as a rule expressed honest admiration, which to a great extent was extended to the Russian people.

As surprising as it may seem, the elite's SP effort, although following its course, appears to have been doing so out of inertia, with the elite's thoughts presumably elsewhere. Therefore, whilst in the run up to the 2018 FIFA WC all the SP rhetoric is technically present, no one can seriously expect that whatever little SP Russia will potentially accrue from it, not least due to the ensconced Western media negativity towards Russia as it is now, will even distantly remind us of what Nye (1990) initially had in mind. It would be a safe guess to assume, thus, that the grand façade of the 2018 FIFA WC, which will no doubt become a nation-building mechanism and a foundation for another national myth, hides Putin's controversial yet undisputable re-election ambitions. It is also hardly surprising considering the fact that the most enduring legacy of the Sochi Olympics in the eyes of the foreign publics from now on will be the unprecedented doping scandal, which, as a result, will account for the future low credibility of Russia's elite sport. Russian SME's soft power leveraging strategy is likely to hinge now on throwing an even superior event. In this respect, one could expect with a fair share of confidence that the 2018 FIFA WC will do its utmost to supplant any negative associations left after the Sochi Olympics. Furthermore, bearing in mind the previously discussed path dependency of the Russian elite as well as unlikely changes to the political

system in the foreseeable future, which could hypothetically impel the West to take sides with Russia anew and hence put its SP on the conventional track, it would be a fairly safe guess to assume that Russia will further pursue large-scale sporting events. In this respect it will follow in the footsteps of Canada, which according to Grix and Brannagan (2016, p.261), 'has become ''addicted'' to hosting SMEs', albeit for a different reason. Whereas Canada uses SMEs to 'show case itself globally' (ibid), Russia, in turn, does not expect that SMEs will shower it with SP benefits and substantially improve its international standing. What they will do for sure, though, is keep Russia as a hot topic on the international agenda, whilst discretely fulfilling the elite's goals regarding domestic politics in the process.

10.2 Russia's Sports Diplomacy

Whereas the 2014 Sochi Olympics were globally visible and, as a result, are the most memorable Russian exploit in SP to date, it is the concrete initiatives and obligations under the aegis of sports diplomacy, however, which are likely to bring Russia tangible SP benefits. Therefore, whilst the Commonwealth of Independent States remains Russia's foreign policy priority, despite Russia's current conflict with Ukraine, surprisingly even the sports officials interviewed there indicated that the Olympics certainly reinforced the notion of the Russian World by generating a symbolic feeling of co-ownership over the spectacle (for the in-depth discussion of methodology of the surveys see Appendix H). The most enthusiastic in this respect were representatives of the older generations, who were socialised during Soviet times. Although at the moment any sports diplomacy is scarcely possible between Ukraine and Russia as the Ukrainian officials' reaction to the pictures where the athletes of the two states posed together during the 2016 Rio Olympics and other gestures of friendship between them caught on camera emphatically showed (Klikushin, *Observer*, August 15, 2016), as an

SP mechanism, sport is still imbued with a great deal of influence potential in the broader CIS region. One interviewee surmised in this respect that:

> this is an indication that the legacy of the Soviet sports system, its ideology and values are very much alive. Even if we speak to the athletes and official of the same generation from the Baltic States they will be likely to say the same. That Russian sport remains our big brother and we are proud of it (Int6, 59:01).

The very essence of the Russian World and Russia as a 'regional superpower' revolve around buttressing existing 'multi-layered and all-embracing' (Int2, 10:24) cultural, family, and sporting ties. By the same token, the 'strengthening of international sports ties' or Russia's sports diplomacy, which is meant to 'increase competitiveness of Russian sport on the international arena' (Strategy, p.8), emphatically mirrors the trends in the official foreign policy and priorities laid out in the Concept. Thus, a programme of cooperation in sport with Belarus until 2018 (from 08.12.2016, Report 2016, p.65) is a part of 'expanding strategic cooperation … with a view to promoting integration in all areas'. In the 2005 Address, Putin declared that Russia's civilisational mission in Eurasia, 'which envisages enrichment and strengthening of our historical commonality through democratic values multiplied by national interests', should be resumed. Following this logic, Russia uses sports diplomacy amongst other things to signal its endorsement of a Georgian breakaway region that, as of now, is a partially recognised state of South Ossetia, whose athletes were lobbied by Russia to have an opportunity to compete internationally and thus symbolically encouraging Ossetia's diplomatic recognition (Memorandum of Cooperation in Sport signed in 2016, Report 2016). A similar agreement was signed with Transnistria and another Georgian breakaway region, Abkhazia, whose athletes, not being able to represent their partially recognised state, regularly competed for Russia (Memorandum of Understanding from 19.04.2017). For both Caucasus states, sport and the possibility of following in the footsteps of Kosovo, Palestine and the Republic of China and obtaining an IOC affiliation, could be a major step towards final

formal recognition (IOC, 2014a). Sport also plays its role in Russia making a common cause with its military ally and the CIS member Armenia in the aftermath of it joining the Eurasian Economic Union in lieu of signing the Association Agreement with the EU: the Memorandum of Cooperation in Sport was signed on 5 June 2015. In line with a central tenet of its SP proposition, namely the advocacy of a dialogue of civilisations and world diversity, Russia championed the formation of a working group on the development of national sports within the CIS members. It stands for organisation of festival of national sports (Report 2015).

Apart from promoting its interests and strengthening its influence through sport in the geographically close regions abroad, including the Baltic States, as a part of 'developing comprehensive, equal, and trust-based partnership and strategic cooperation' (Concept 2016) Russia pursues mutually-beneficial sports ties with China. These include the preparation of the 'Silk Route' rally, the setting up of a working group on joint research in elite sports (Report 2015), and the facilitation of cooperation during the preparation for the 2022 Olympic Games (Memorandum of Understanding in Sport, Report 2016). Importantly, as a strategic initiative to popularise ice hockey in Asia, a sport where Russia is traditionally strong, and thus increase Russia's SP, a Memorandum of Cooperation between the Russian Ice Hockey Federation and the Chinese Ice Hockey Association was signed on 4 July 2017 (fhr.ru). Russia's 'committ[ment] to the comprehensive strengthening of relations with the Latin American and Caribbean States taking into account the growing role of this region in global affairs' (Concept 2016) is also manifest in sport with cooperation memorandums signed with Peru, Cuba, Uruguay, Venezuela, Paraguay, Argentina, Columbia, Mexico, and Brazil. In a spirit of Russia's 'consistent … efforts to strengthen its comprehensive strategic partnership' and a policy of 'build[ing] good-neighbourly relations and promot[ion of] mutually beneficial cooperation' (Concept 2016), sport memorandums were signed with Japan, Iran, UAE, the

UK, Mozambique, Vietnam, and Mongolia (minsport.gov.ru). This allegedly cooperative sports diplomacy might indeed accrue some SP benefits to Russia, as it accords with the logic of Grix and Brannagan (2016, p.256), which holds that the focus on 'build[ing] long term relationships based on trust and credibility, eventually lead to an enabling environment for effective government policies'.

In addition to strengthening the 'overall cooperation with Asian and European sports organisations' (p.10), the Strategy also indicates the need to increase Russia's representation in international sports organisations. The state's influence, as a result, is effectively maintained with 320 Russians represented in the international organisations of Olympic sports, with 21 of them being in leadership positions in 2016 (Report 2016, p.65). Russia, respectively, comes second only to the USA in terms of representation in sports organisations (Report 2014-2017).

Russia also hosts major events dedicated to sports policy and development such as the International Sports Forum 'Russia – A Sports Power', where representatives of the USA, the UK, Canada, Austria, Czech Republic, Sweden, Holland, Switzerland, France, South Africa, Belarus, and Kazakhstan took part in 2016 (Report 2016). In 2017, Russia hosted in Kazan a sixth International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport with representatives of 195 states.

Other recent major strands of Russia's sports diplomacy include a cross-cultural collaboration to defend the Olympic status of wrestling and a campaign to recognise sambo as an Olympic discipline. In the first instance, the USA, Iran, and Russia in 2013 came 'together in an unusual alliance in New York as they grapple[d] with a shared challenge - how to save their sport at the Olympics' (Sherwell, *The Telegraph*, May 15, 2013). Traditionally

uncompromising opponents over the most strategic issues, the three states thus successfully pooled their efforts to reinstate wrestling at the 2020 Olympics, an initiative that 'embodies international sports détente at its best' (MacFarquhar, *The New York Times*, May 14, 2013). Although this concerted initiative came about as a matter of exigency, it represents the most advanced stage and platform of PD. With the superordinate goal to deal with an issue that was unattainable individually (Cowan and Arsenault, 2008), which in this case was the defence of the culturally important wrestling's Olympic status, it was expected that 'the sight of three usually implacable foes competing in such a public place will melt the hearts of [the IOC] committee members' (MacFarquhar, *The New York Times*, May 14, 2013). Although Sherwell (May 15, 2013) of *The Telegraph* reasonably speculated that 'the US-Russia-Iran axis on the wrestling mat, seems unlikely, however, to be a harbinger of better prospects for diplomacy over the Syrian civil war and the Iranian nuclear programme', such cooperation was a perfect venue for building trust and discarding previous impediments to intercultural rapprochement (Cowan and Arsenault, 2008). This is at least true on a people-to-people level such as during the Dual Track Meet Series between the USA and the USSR during the Cold War era. The inclusion of sambo, a wrestling discipline developed in the 1920s by Red Army soldiers, into the Olympic programme, in turn, is a personal ambition of Vladimir Putin, who is Honorary President of the International Sambo Federation (FIAS). He also championed submitting the papers to the IOC in 2016 (sambo-fias.or). This initiative, however, became complicated due to the discretisation of Russia as a sporting power in view of the recent doping scandals (Fomin, *Izvestiia*, November 17, 2017). According to Rashid Nurgaliyev, the deputy secretary of Russia's Security Council (cited by *RadioFreeLiberty*, rferl.org), sambo still 'helps promote Russian culture and language abroad'. Sambo has this diplomatic potential not only because it is a 'primordial Russian sport', but because even its regulations are in Russian (ibid).

10.3 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the findings of this thesis detailing Russia's externally oriented Olympic-specific SP strategy and broader sports diplomacy. Whereas the previous chapter established why sport became 13.6 times more important for the Russian leadership in the period between 2008 and 2016 than during Putin's first two tenures and highlighted the mechanisms through which sport has been turned into an indispensable nation-building medium, this chapter claimed that sport is no less important for Russia's foreign policy. It must cause some disappointment and frustration for Russian authorities, therefore, that Nye (*Project Syndicate*, December 12, 2014) made it clear that not only did Russia fail to capitalise on the Sochi Olympics as a source of SP, its ultimate interpretation of the concept has little to do with what he initially envisaged. Although indeed, vis-à-vis all indicators Russia did not reap any reputational benefits by hosting the 2014 Sochi Olympics, it appears that it will continue to pursue SMEs to maintain visibility in the global arena. The most surprising finding of this thesis was that Russian sport still has SP potential in Ukraine, as officials interviewed in Ukraine expressed mostly positive attitudes towards the Sochi Olympics and Russian sports system. This was particularly striking, as at the time of this research Russia's general image was very negative in Ukraine, due to the political issues between the countries. Nonetheless, setting out from such a negative verdict from the man behind the concept, this chapter attempted to show why Russia did not win this SP game and what aspects are most likely to keep SP benefits out of Russia's reach in the future. Below is a summary of the causes of Russia's predicaments.

1. **Russia launched an SP project without a well-articulated coherent identity in place.** Before being awarded the 2014 Winter Olympics and well into the preparations for them, Russia had a bold vision of what it wanted to be and of its desired place in

the world (Hinck, *et al.*, 2018). Yet, as ironic as it might seem, it also had a rather vague idea about what it actually was and what exactly it would take to get what it aspired to (Anisimova, 2018). Such a paradox arouse as a result of the historical vicissitudes Russia had been exposed to and meant that Russia's supreme ambition came along with a deep-seated self-consciousness and a feeling of inferiority it found particularly hard to bear. As a result, the Sochi Olympics were assigned ambivalent and somewhat conflicting tasks.

Firstly, the Olympics were meant to improve Russia's global image and make it easier for the government to promote its interests (Alekseyeva, 2014). That is, exercise SP. Bearing in mind, however, that SP occupies a middle ground between a state's identity and interests, or in other words, is a reflection of the former and a way to achieve the latter, the very fact that via the Olympics Russia was also trying to construct its national narrative and finally find out what it stood for (Arnold, 2018), made simultaneous achievement of these two objectives rather debatable (Rutland and Kazantsev, 2016). A distinct inclusive national identity is a sine qua non for the success of SMEs when it comes to image building and SP functions. In other words, if a state launches such an arduous and complicated SP endeavour as an SME, its national identity project ought to be complete or at the very least in its final stages. A coherent identity defines a rich, yet logical SP proposition that enjoys an increased buy-in among the international public. National narrative could, indeed, receive a significant boost or call for some minor revisions, as was the case in Germany in the context of the 2006 FIFA WC (Grix and Houlihan, 2014; Grix and Brannagan, 2016) or as it happened in the UK after the 2012 Olympic Games (Oettler, 2015; Bryant, 2015; Park and Tae, 2016). Nonetheless, it is a recurring practice among the states in

transition, which suffer from a sort of ideological vacuum and uncertainty as well as see themselves assigned an inadequate place in the international system, to pursue both agendas through SMEs (Li, 2017; Barr, 2012). This explains why Russia during the Olympics was trying to flaunt all its trump cards at once. No wonder that the density of messages and accumulation of different historical epochs during the ceremonies turned out to be bewildering to the international audience (*The Atlantic*, February 7, 2014; Rice, *The Independent*, February 7, 2014; Dejevsky, *The Guardian*, February 13, 2014). Given that, overall, the commentators also lacked a necessary level of cultural awareness, the ceremonies hardly added anything to the stereotypical image of Russia besides, perhaps, from bringing home the message that Russia is back and to be reckoned with (*The New York Times*, February 7, 2014).

2. **Russia's political and civilisational model of development poses a challenge to the Western Consensus.** Finlay and Xin (2010) in their rigorous analysis of the 2008 Beijing Olympics effects on China's reputation in the USA contended that the Games achieved the opposite result to what the host nation originally intended to achieve. Instead of witnessing China's earnest effort to integrate to the global community as a peaceful power, albeit advocating cultural and civilisational diversity of the world (Courmont, 2013), the public in the USA predominantly saw a threat to Western hegemony. It makes perfect sense, therefore, that such a multi-billion dollar harbinger of a new era, when possible challengers could audaciously refuse ‘to conform to the norms of Western civil society' (Finlay and Xin, 2010, p.894), provoked public agony and media outrage in the West (Chen and Colapinto, 2010a; Sparks, 2010; Sun, 2010). Although there are significant differences between Russia's and China's developmental models and, thus, the messages they sell (Wilson, 2015), the Olympics they hosted

faced a similar fate. Both Russia and China hardly stood any chance against general well-entrenched anti-Russian and anti-China sentiments. There were also influential NGOs and civil society groups putting pressure on the host in both instances (amnesty.org), thereby further escalating hostile Western rhetoric (Rights groups criticize IOC over Sochi abuses, *dw.com*, February 7, 2014). It has become commonplace to attribute Russia's Olympic SP disgrace to the annexation of Crimea (Rutland and Kazantsev, 2016). Indeed, Russia's irrevocably squandered all possible SP benefits in the West by its actions in Crimea and Ukraine (Nye, 2014), and what is more, due to a wholehearted embrace of the government position by the majority of the population. It does not appear to be entirely the case though. The reality is that what happened in Russia bears a remarkable resemblance to the situation in China six years ago. As observed by Finlay and Xin (2010, p.895):

> In the United States, at least, the battle was over before it began, as NGO and civil society groups promoted media messages that reassured American audiences that they were on the side of the righteous, and as Chinese nationalism, climaxing in xenophobic protests in the spring of 2008, cast a dubious shadow over any alternative soft rise narrative that emerged from China.

This only confirms repetitive disregard in the West of the nation-states' right to cultural distinctiveness and philosophies of life, as well as refusal to tolerate any alternative models of development. Russia's reclaimed civilisational and by default SP mission stems from and is a way to legitimise its own sovereign model of development as an alternative to Western self-righteous uncompromising political and moral dictates; it draws from a reservoir of conservative values (Kiseleva, 2015; Just, 2016). In a nutshell, it lies in the ‘facilitation of the development of constructive dialogue and partnership with a view to promoting harmony [with an emphasis on religious] and mutual enrichment of various cultures and civilisations' (Address 2007). Dialogue, in

turn, has to ensue with ‘due regard for each state's national context, culture, history, and values' (ibid). Yet instead of fulfilling an aspirational objective of PD, that is lead to cultural dialogue, let alone civilisational collaboration, Russian Olympics once again led to a distressing confrontation.

To sum up, Russia was naive like China before it, to apply the concept of SP, a Western construct, how it saw fit and not to expect retaliation. Understandably, this negative response to the most significant Russia's SP effort so far and skepticism as regards its sincerity, in addition to misconceptions about Russia that still abound, could have further unsettling consequences. This effectively means that lest the rest of the world stops playing by the Western rules of this SP game, the concept should be modified to allow for other paradigms of development.

3. **Russia adopted an SP strategy late during the Olympic cycle.** Whereas SMEs hosts in the West have been familiar with the concept of SP for some time now, periphery hosts usually see SP within the context of a general SME rhetoric. Consequently, although South Africa, for example, while hosting the 2010 FIFA WC vied to counter Afro-pessimism and bring about African Renaissance, it was more an image-building affair than any holistic strategy to leverage its SP potential (Cornellissen, 2011, 2014; Knott *et al.*, 2017). Russia, like China previously (Cabestan, 2009), officially adopted the SP concept as a part of their respective foreign policy portfolios only a year before they hosted the Olympics (Foreign Policy Concept, 2013). It does not imply that these three BRICS states paid no heed to the reputational gains SMEs they hosted could bring, yet there is a notable difference between aiming at some positive change in the image or a growth of tourist volumes and pursuing the whole spectrum of SP gains. Ideally, a shrewd SP strategy in context with an SME could fast-track a host's rise in

the international hierarchy by dramatically substantiating its claims to a more equitable place in the international system (Collins, 2007; Modrey, 2008; Maraniss, 2008; Horton and Saunders, 2012; Guthrie-Shimizu, 2013). Both China and Russia are bound to be reprimanded and their SP intent discredited as pathetic so long as their form of government does not come to resemble those of the West. Yet Russia's malaise somewhat differs from China's predicament.

China's extensive SP and PD activity targets global South predominantly and has a significant impact there (Lukunka, 2009; Suzuki, 2009). Russia in the 2000s still had its sights on appealing to the West whilst remaining attractive to its neighbours. Its major PD agencies, *Rossotrudnichestvo*, and *Russkiy Mir* were established soon after Russia was awarded the Olympics above all to spread objective information about the country, which is rather an infant stage of PD than a part of a serious SP agenda. Setting out from the premise, however, that the Sochi Olympics in the first instance were meant to acquaint the world audience with modern Russia (Sochi Report, 2014), its people, and combat abundant negative stereotypes, the Games without a doubt achieved a significant result. One study analysing the Sochi Olympic discourse on Twitter concluded, for example, that Russia ‘managed its image well through the Games', because an aggregated volume of ‘potentially damaging themes for Russia's image was much smaller as compared to the combined volume of other, more positive themes' (Kirilenko and Stepchenkova, 2017, p.64). The statistical data of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation corroborates recent tourists' fascination with Russia; it, thus, was the ninth most-visited country in the world for three years in a row since 2012, reaching almost 30 million during the Olympic year (e-unwto.org). Although the tourist rate growth dropped in 2016 and 2017, apparently due to some

extent to Russia's unsettling political milieu (ibid), after the 2018 FIFA WC, which has ‘been a brilliant showcase for Russia as a destination', Russia, it appears, has a chance to finally ‘claim its place on the global travel map' (Morris, *The Telegraph*, July 16, 208). Symptomatic of the potential positive dynamics is a 76 per cent increase in searches for flights to Russia on Skyscanner since after the WC final to the end of spring 2019 compared to the same period last year (ibid). Despite a tiresome visa application process and safety issues, Russia pages on British tourist websites have enjoyed a roughly 135 per cent rise in interest since May this year (ibid). Another sign of the positive legacy of the FIFA WC is that the tourist horizons seem to have widened to include not only Moscow and St Petersburg but also Volgograd, Kaliningrad and Ekaterinburg (ibid).

Seen this way, the Sochi Olympics and an unremitting string of major international sports events lived up to their tasks and reputation as ‘the best forms of activities in [the soft power] area that … take into account both international experience and national peculiarities' (Concept 2013) and contributed to the ‘establish[ment of] Russia's positive image worthy of the high status of its culture, education, science, sports achievements, the level of civil society development' (ibid). By contrast, if the Sochi Olympics are to be assessed in terms of advancing Russia's comprehensive SP proposition, that is a reconciliation of a European identity and a sovereign ‘cultural and spiritual identity', the idea of ‘a common world for people of different nationalities and confessions' (Address 2007), as well as the advocacy of ‘a culture of international relations based on the rule of international law – without enforcement of development models and forcing of natural flow of historical process' (Address 2007), it certainly did not strike the right note with its target audience in the West. In order to sell this

ambitious vision of itself, Russia would have to come up with something far more compelling than throwing a series of SMEs.

4. **Russia corrupted its SP effort by using doping.** Whereas Russia's thrust into Ukraine which derailed all the progress Russia was making so far in the SP sphere and cast a pall of doom over the overall successful Olympics could be attributed to circumstances where the Kremlin was left with little choice than to behave the way it did lest Russia was displaced from its position as a regional superpower and further relegated to an inferior position in the international system, Russia is the only one to blame for the doping scandal it found itself in. After it was found that there was a state-sponsored systemic doping program in Russia between 2011 and 2015, IOC revoked 6 Olympic medals won by Russian athletes in Sochi (Ruiz, *The New York Times,* November 22, 2017). This not only meant that Russia was knocked off its place atop of the medal table (Austin, *The Independent,* November 24, 2017), which was considered by its leadership to be amongst the serious SP arguments but had other far-reaching ramifications.

   Although faced with firm evidence Russian officials admitted doping violations and vouched for addressing the shortcoming in Russian elite sports system (McPhate, *The New York Times*, May 15, 2016), Russia was severely and unprecedentedly punished for playing dirty. As a result, Russia had a close escape from a blanket ban at the 2016 Rio Olympics (Ingle, *The Guardian*, July 23, 2016); its Olympic Committee was banned in 2017 which meant that Russian athletes competed as neutrals in Pyeongchang and there was no Russian flag and anthem during the Games (Makur, *The New York Times*, February 22, 2018). Instead of reaping reputational benefits from the victories of its athletes, Russia, being exposed to worldwide contempt and

resolute condemnation of its underhand methods, was licking the wounds and making lame excuses. This doping scandal is but one of Russia's misconducts recently and will remain a lingering impediment to reinstatement of legitimacy and credibility of Russian sport (Russia doping ban: Panel advises Wada to uphold Rusada ban, *BBC.com*, September 13, 2017). In case Russia still considers SP as part of its foreign policy it will have to learn its lessons from this doping scandal and see it as a cautionary example what happens when instead of improving the image by rendering it accurate and reliable one decides to falsify it.

5. **Strong anti-Russian media in the West.** The ambivalence of the SP concept is evidenced by the myriad of approaches to its measurement and substantial discrepancies in methodologies. As a result, it seems only worthwhile that developing and emerging countries should be assessed vis a vis each other and not in direct and, as it were, futile comparison with established SP superpowers. Moreover, whatever the appraisal criteria, due regard should be given to who the paramount target audience of selected SP strategies is, as it is impossible to be universally liked (Schmitt, 2018). All the same, notwithstanding the ranking, an objective, non-discriminatory picture of Russia's SP reach and effectiveness is hardly obtainable. Firstly, as mentioned earlier, because there has not been any robust and homogenous SP measurement methodology developed to date. This means that the same states fare differently against each other depending on the survey (Rutland and Kazantsev, 2016). Secondly, not only is the concept firmly rooted in the Western paradigm of development and espouses only Western values as righteous and laudable (Wilson, 2015), but present indexes, likewise, measure mostly Western feedback to any given SP strategy. Thirdly, and most importantly of all, change in Russia's image has rarely

anything to do with what Russia does, positive or otherwise. As this thesis has shown, media channels in the West are traditionally so belligerently disposed toward Russia that any message it sells at best faces the fate of being dismissed as alien, generates skepticism or is sweepingly denounced as a veiled threat (Miskimmon and O'Loughlin, 2017).

As a result, whilst the majority of the audience in the West consumes Russia's SP indirectly, through the augmented reality created by the media, it logically forms an opinion foisted upon it. This opinion, in turn, customarily reflects the views and values of those in power structures (Benn, 2014). In this way, Russia's SP, filtered through the prism of the Western media locked in their anti-Russian positions bears hardly any resemblance to what Russia sends out there. As observed by Tsygankov (2017), it is not that Russia is without its faults and does not deserve criticism, but lambasting Russia seems to take precedence over a dispassionate representation of the truth.

The media not only foster domestic identity but also help the local public to internalise certain salient information about foreign states and societies from the plethora of all available (Oettler, 2015; Thomas and Antony, 2015). The Western media do not even assume that Putin's approval rates, for example, could be genuine, brought about by the concrete socio-economic benefits and restored pride, rather than be a result of underhand tactics of the ‘vain and petulant, with a taste for cruelly needling others' Russian leader (Hoagland, *The Washington Post*, March 21, 2014). In addition to that, by portraying Russia as ever more barbarian, a savage or, even better, a prime universal threat, ruled by an opportunistic KGB spy, whose traits better ‘befit [those of] a drunken gambler' (ibid, August 7, 2015), the media put him in the same row with unpredictable ‘evilothers' who include Saddam Hussein, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Kim

Jong-un, etc. (Altukhov and Nauright, 2018, p.1121). That in itself is a sufficient justification for the USA relentlessly and unwaveringly promoting its values in the world. As a result, Tsygankov posits (2017, p.31), that the ‘presentation of Russia as an abusive autocracy is a way to promote a particular image of democracy' and ‘in this new digital age, media, more than ever, are a critical tool of global governance and soft power'.

Evidence from another study comparing the depiction of Britain in and Russia during the pre-Olympic discourse in *The New York Times* draws an identical grim conclusion (Bolshakova, 2016). Despite the similar problems faced by London and Sochi in the run-up to the Olympics they hosted, the media source disproportionately dwelled on failures and weaknesses of Russia, whilst selectively extolling London's virtues and focusing on the projected legacy of the Games for the whole British society. Thus, whereas the Western media prefer to attribute Russia a national identity of ‘an autocratic, abusive, and revisionist power' (Tsygankov, 2017, p.31), the national brand identity it tailored specifically for the Sochi Olympics could be summed up as ‘dangerous, inefficient, inept, turbulent and troubled' (Bolshakova, 2016, p.462). This way, the author opines, that by ‘becom[ing] Britain's negative Olympic alter ego and its cultural Other … Russia is juxtaposed not only against the UK specifically, but against the whole Western world, of which Britain and the US are prototypical members' (ibid, p.446).

Yet, there is much more to the Western apprehension about Russia, than just confirming its own positive identity or setting the Kremlin on the straight and narrow. Clearly, Western suspicion of Russia is a sign of what Benn (2014, p.1320) calls a ‘transition from ‘‘Sovietophobia" to Russophobia', which, however, ‘camouflaged' by

legitimate criticism, is no less real. The author goes on to trace the origins of the West's deep-seated resentment of Russia, which, it appears, emanates from cultural insensitivity, utter contempt and boils down to mere fear. Initially, it was unsubstantiated insinuations about Russia harbouring plans to conquer India that gave rise to Britain's grievances in the early 19th century (Mettan, 2017). Crimean War (1863-1866) only further ignited public animosity towards Russia in the UK. It is particularly noteworthy, that it was the British press which sort of pioneered Russophobia and deliberately fuelled tensions between the states by circulating bogus stories for the sole purpose of boosting sales (Benn, 2014). This is a lamentable state of affairs as this deliberate miscommunication continues to entrench incomprehension and foster chronic mistrust between the two worlds. Beyond that, it is also dangerous.

This thesis analysed Russia's-West mutual influence from the point of social constructivism, which primarily ‘focuses on interstate interactions as the source for new, or reproduced, conceptions of self and other, which in turn affect state propensities to fall into conflictual or cooperative behaviour' (Copeland, 2000, p.211). In other words, every reaction to the state's actions by its significant others causes a change in attitudes and, in the long run, has a bearing on its identity. Therefore, in case the Western media and politicians keep demonstrating dismissive attitudes to whatever comes from Russia, it is only reasonable that it will eventually adopt not simply a defensive but conflictual position. Instead of encouraging a civilisational rapprochement and building trust, this hostility will finally put an end on Russia's conventional SP project. This scenario is consistent with Le's (2006, pp.162-163) observation that ‘‘anti-Other rhetoric' is hazardous … because it can eventually develop into a spiral of distrust, dislike and sometimes hate that exacerbates

difficulties and helps them escalate into a conflict that is more than just discursive'. Whereas its resolve to be like the West is history now, to a significant degree due to the West's intransigence to Russia's effort throughout most of the 1990s-2000s (Zwack, 2014), it appears that Russia is still determined to find common ground with the West, albeit on new terms. Under the current circumstances, however, it would not be too far off the mark to assume that Russia might drift away for good and seek other friends. In the meantime, the role of the media in shaping West-Russia identities and creating a context for bilateral relations merits further academic attention.

CHAPTER 11: CONCLUSION

This final chapter assesses the overall result of this thesis in establishing what makes Russia an 'outlier' amongst SMEs hosts. By hosting the 2014 Winter Olympics and the 2018 FIFA WC, two SMEs one after another, Russia confirms two assumptions made in the course of this research. First, Russia endows SMEs with nothing short of magical properties, which is similar to other emerging SMEs hosts before it, including South Africa, China, and Brazil, Otherwise, what else could possible justify the exorbitant $52 billion spent on the Sochi Games, which made it the most expensive SME ever, and the no less onerous and costly 2018 FIFA WC? Second, is that despite putting in an incredible effort to organise these events, Russia appears not to be fully aware what exactly it wants to achieve. In other words, if Russia pursues PD or aspires to project SP and reap re-imaging benefits, which are traditionally touted to be the most coveted constructs by SMEs hosts, what would explain the absence of any coherent SP strategy? Additionally, in Russia's case there were no visible political reforms, which from the neo-liberal perspective, are by default necessary for a non-liberal state to re-image itself and project SP in the context with an SME.

The inevitable conclusion is that Russia, whilst sticking to the habit of SMEs hosting, has shifted its focus to other political considerations than enhancing conventional SP. Obviously, these new objectives became shoring up legitimacy domestically and forging alliances in the conservative world. It should be made clear, however, that the Sochi Olympics project was conceived in 2005 (Sochi Report, 2014) – the time when the Kremlin was still firmly determined to move forward along its path of integration to the Western liberal order. It is only logical that putting on an SME would have signalled Russia's, compliance with modernity, its likeness with Western democracies and close affinity of their cardinal values. Russia began drifting apart from the West only in 2007, a process that was announced by the

Munich speech of Putin and ultimately triggered by the Georgian war a year later (Schmitt, 2018). It would be safe to assume that up until several years before the start of the Olympics Russia earnestly had been aspiring to improve its image and reputation globally and stuck to the familiar framework of organising and SME. There appear to be two reasons for that.

Firstly, Russia had it decided to do so, would hardly have been allowed to reinvent the wheel to either change the format of the Games or introduce a much different rhetoric, as there were strict regulations by the IOC it had to conform to. Secondly, for some time it did not look like the Kremlin significantly discriminated between the needs and preferences of the Western audience, domestic population, and potential friends elsewhere. Indeed, as has been discussed in Chapter 9, there were two different slogans used as a part of the promotional campaign at home and abroad, and the Kremlin already advocated the idea of 'the Russian World', yet so long as Russia did not make any outrageously controversial moves there was hardly any need for a radical shift of priorities. It is not that the leadership necessarily expected the world to go wild about Russia, but its Olympics well until their final stages did not directly clash with the Western ideals. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that Russia changed its priorities for good only during the Olympics and post factum when it finally saw that the effort it put in was not having a desired effect in the West. In view of all the above, Russia differs even from other emerging hosts, like China and South Africa, for example. To illustrate the point, China for some time now has been investing in its SP promotion globally. Its strategy includes Confucius Institutes, which aim to raise awareness of the Chinese language and culture; China also has an extensive strategy of engaging African nations (Wilson, 2015). It is particularly noteworthy here that it was China's SP strategy towards Africa which received a particular boost in the aftermath of the Beijing Games (Suzuki, 2009). South Africa, for its part, still basked in its post-apartheid pride and counted on the reputational benefits to accrue from its

recently acquired post-racist identity (Cornelissen, 2014). Beyond this, China in its SP proposition particularly relied on what became known as the Beijing Consensus – a highly attractive model of a free market economy and an autocratic form of governance in some parts of the world (Holyk, 2011). South Africa certainly had some benefits to garner in a type of 'having the honour' to speak on behalf of the whole continent in an attempt to change a negative 'Brand Africa' image (Knott *et al.*, 2017, p.902). Whilst exercising PD in the process, South Africa also drew from the whole pool of Pan-African images (Cornelissen, 2011).

As it transpired in the course of the document analysis undertaken for this study, up until 2007, the year it was awarded the Sochi Olympics, Russia did not have any agencies or institutions specifically entrusted with its image promotion and reputation management internationally. Although technically two such agencies, *Russkiy Mir* and *Rossotrudnichestvo,* were founded in 2007 and 2008 respectively, they were aimed exclusively at cultural diplomacy. The concept of SP, in turn, entered official discourse only in 2013, when it appeared in the Foreign Policy Concept. This late and mechanical adoption of the SP concept, which was rather a matter of exigency and what appears to be a type of a self-binding part of SMEs hosting, meant that Russia was time-constrained in the development and implementation of its event-specific SP strategy. What emerged from this research and its findings - and which appears to be far more significant in the context of the Nye's (*Project Syndicate*, December 12, 2014) verdict that Russia's SP failed on all accounts - is that Russia did not seem to care much to appreciate what SP essentially was in the first place. Or rather even if it did, it considered itself strong and attractive enough to counter the existing SP understanding, which is based on a neo-liberal model of development.

The paradox is that Russia, and especially its people, wanted to make friends with the world, but as respondents commonly unintentionally mentioned during the interviews for this thesis, being attractive entailed 'forcing (*zastavit*) the world to love us'. Russia's strategy of 'forced love', which is also internalised by its people, certainly runs counter to what it takes to be attractive from a neo-liberal perspective. It also appears that Russia's SP proposition, which is based on Russia's appropriation of both a European identity and a sovereign 'cultural and spiritual identity', and on the idea of 'a common world for people of different nationalities and confessions' (Address 2007), which was particularly manifest during the Sochi ceremonies, did not strike a chord in the West. Russia's advocacy of 'a culture of international relations based on the rule of international law – without enforcement of development models and forcing of natural flow of historical process' (Address 2007), which was also on show in Sochi, in view of Russia's actions in Ukraine, likewise, is hardly credible as an alternative to the West's moral hegemony. Russia's conservative values, which are seen as archaic even by a large proportion of its own population, in addition to allegations of LGBT rights violations which broke in the run-up to the Sochi Games, also hardly stand a chance to find extensive support in the West.

However, it was Russia's annexation of Crimea and its support of the separatist movement in Donbas, which conclusively depreciated its re-imaging effort. The fact that Russia traded its potential SP gains for controversial hard power attainments and did not seem too perturbed as the former vanished into thin air, led this study to an assumption that Russia's general foreign policy priorities and the motivations behind its SMEs might be much more nuanced than simply making friends or appealing to foreign publics. This assumption was both confirmed and refuted by the evidence from this study. Firstly, Russia, indeed, wanted to overcome the reputational damages of the 1990s when it was drastically and humiliatingly reduced to a

pariah state. The reputation it aspired for, in short, was to be considered strong again and respected for it alone. The Sochi Olympics and the 2018 FIFA WC even more so, were meant to signal this newly-acquired strength globally. Among other things, judging by the evidence from this study, strength for Russia still essentially entails being feared. Viewed from this perspective, the Sochi Olympics and the Crimean affair, global reputational effects notwithstanding, certainly appear to have achieved one thing – they convinced the Russian people of Russia's self-sufficiency and its increased agency in the world. In other words, although these two events are manifestations of soft and hard power respectively, and whilst the Olympics were carefully planned, the case of Crimea appears to have been an extreme measure in the extreme situation, judging by the interview findings for this study and published statistics, the message that 'Russia is strong again' went down particularly well at home. This phenomenal national uplifting following these two events led this study to two conclusions. First, Russia prioritises a so-called domestic SP strategy in the course of the SMEs, rather than a conventional externally-focused SP. This is not that extraordinary in itself as the other emerging host, China, also viewed the Olympics as a national affair and like Russia wanted to overcome its own inferiority complex of being viewed as the 'Sick Man of Asia' (Luo, 2010, p.778). Both South Africa and Brazil wanted to overcome racial and social class divisions by hosting SMEs. Yet it was in Russia's case where domestic considerations tipped the scales, making its elites compromise all SP attainments so far as to go to war shortly after an SME.

This striking inconsistency in the efforts Russia invested in an event and an offhand nullification of the reputational progress made by its subsequent hard power actions, appear perfectly consistent if one remembers the Olympics Russia's predecessor, the Soviet Union, hosted in 1980. Viewed from this perspective, Russia's actions, however, appear to be in

perfect compliance with Russia's self-image. This self-image, in turn, envisages an ability to form a sphere of influence, as became evident, not only through non-coercive means. What seems to be the most important point to transpire throughout this research, is that Russia appears ready to go to any lengths to have a say in defining its geopolitical fault lines.

In view of Russia's aggressive actions towards Ukraine, respondents interviewed in Ukraine for this study were expected to express a highly negative opinion about the Sochi Olympics and be sceptical about Russia's SP as such. Paradoxically, all interviewees expressed positive attitudes towards Russian sport in general and expressed an admiration regarding the Olympics it hosted. Notwithstanding the reputational damage Russia recently inflicted on itself, this evidence bears witness that there is still potential inherent in Russian sport as an SP mechanism in the post-Soviet space. The results of these findings, due to a small sample size, cannot be considered representative of the whole population of Ukraine; Ukrainian attitudes towards Russian sport and SMEs require further studies, which might be problematic in the current circumstances. With regard to Russia's general sport diplomacy, this thesis has shown that similar to the Soviet period, it mirrors a formal foreign policy line. As a result, it targets the post-Soviet space, which Russia considers to be its strategic sphere of interests. Sport is also used to endorse the Georgian break-away regions, South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Memorandum of Understanding from 19.04.2017). The athletes from these partially recognised states compete under a Russian flag, thus using sport in the process of vying for potential formal recognition. China, South America and Africa are also targeted by Russia's sport diplomacy, which is not too different from how the USSR exercised what it saw as its SP.

This thesis also revealed how Russia's identity evolved over thirty four years, which separate the two Olympics it hosted. It was established in the process that Russia badly longs for

reference points which could engender self-respect and pride. Whereas in 1980 Russia was 'the first among equals' in that it was the flagship state in the biggest multinational state in the world, it is now a national state. Although it still has the biggest territory in the world and is populated by a multitude of nationalities, Russia can hardly offer any universalising mission, like the Soviet Union did. As this thesis has demonstrated, SMEs and elite sport in Russia are part of the leadership strategy to signal a continuity of the state, akin to other nation-defining projects, which include a space programme and a resurrection of the army.

On the basis of state documents and interviews, this thesis established that the overarching objective of SMEs and elite sport in Russia is to stimulate what could be broadly called nation-building. As mentioned before, non-liberal states share a penchant for using sport and SMEs as a nation-building vehicle. It is the scale of the nation-building through sport and a multitude of functions it is entrusted with, that make Russia a true 'outlier' amongst SMEs hosts. As shown in chapter 10, sport in Russia fulfils the following objectives:

a) National consolidation;
b) National mobilisation;
c) Patriotism stimulation / connecting epochs;
d) Regime legitimisation / psychological substitution;
e) Construction of a New Russian Person / psychological verification / overcoming of inferiority complex.

Although all these objectives are interesting and, as this thesis has shown, efficaciously implemented through sport, it is the construction of the New Russian Person that takes place through sport, which particularly caught the author's attention. What makes this particularly noteworthy is that it is a welcome change to the figure of a mobster who was a role model for the Russian youth of the 1990s.

The findings of this study, which by far went beyond the initial research questions, indicated the multiplicity of possible research avenues into socio-political processes and system in Russia. This study identified major mechanisms and tactics used by the elites in Russia to achieve their nation-building and foreign policy objectives through sport and *fizkultura*. Judging from the literature to date, both academic and mainstream, Russia's SP strategy and effort are being examined and evaluated predominantly in the context with SMEs and elite sport. On the one hand, such an over-concentration of attention objectively reflects what appears to be Russia's addiction to SMEs hosting, its leadership's general obsession with sport and international success therein. But on the other hand, it could have negative effects in that it limits an understanding of Russia's SP to a specific context, and although versatile and extensive, no way exhaustive audience. Clearly, there is a foregone opportunity of obtaining a more holistic impression of Russia's SP, its impact and workings. In this respect, it begs further discussion how, for example, culture in its broadest sense, being traditionally the most compelling of Russia's SP assets, is put at the government service. One way to achieve this is to take a step back from, yet by no means abandon, scientific inquiry into the contentious practice of SMEs hosting, and investigate how Russia's image is being promoted through less conspicuous and more targeted events.

Recently, Gift and Miner (2017, p.129) from University College London and Harvard University respectively, identified two reasons for sports being ‘treated as a quaint diversion from serious scholarship'. The scientists argue that they are the ‘unseriousness' of the subject and an ‘Americanist bias' (ibid, p.137). Whereas there is a strong indication that academic interest will soon match the general industry growth and that sports will gradually become a subfield of political science in its own right, the situation with the second impediment is more complicated. To Gift and Miner, an ‘Americanist bias' means solely that a disproportionate

volume of studies that address the political aspects of sports come from the USA and are dedicated to the North American sports market-specific issues (ibid). This thesis drew attention to another important dimension of this political culture ‘bias', namely liberal SP bias. As is currently the case with Russia, Western-centric limitation of SP concept leads to a paradigmatic hegemony in SMEs research. It was one of the major objectives of this study, therefore, to show not only how and why Russia's understanding of SP is different from the conventional one, but that it also, along with an interpretation thereof by other SMEs hosts, adds values to the concept instead of challenging or undermining it.

In view of the above, this research took a step towards a more holistic understanding of how sports and politics directly affect each other by ‘apply[ing] a sports frame to broader questions in political science' (ibid, p.138). As has been pointed out throughout the thesis, the fundamental importance of this study is that it not only investigates wider socio-political dynamics in Russia through the prism of sport and SMEs but that it places its externally-oriented dimensions within the purview of IR. This is significant, because despite a profound interest in SMEs hosting, theoretical and practical, and a general recognition of the need to look deeper into the nexus of sports and politics, there have been only isolated academic voices acknowledging the current and potential role of sport in IR. Predictably, research of a complex interrelationship between sport and IR, which could provide, for example, an insight into new dimensions to agency and structure, or a better appreciation of Self and Other, still awaits its heyday. In a way, the general state of affairs as regards an intricate interplay of sports and political science is similar to Russia's socio-political system: policies and research follow concrete developments and events. To illustrate the point, this post hoc nature of academic scrutiny leads to a mechanistic and superficial application of the established practice of SMEs hosting without due regard for the temporal and historical context, the

balances of power and challenges within the international system, which forms its structure, as well as to ignorance of the specificities of the audience and its demands. It is not surprising, therefore, that Russia is not a single SMEs host that fell short of achieving its SP and wider foreign policy agenda.

Although this study has offered probably the most comprehensive picture so far of how the elites shape Russia's socio-political landscape through sports, the author sees further potential in investigating sports as a regime legitimisation mechanism and what it adds to Russia as an ‘imagined community' particularly in the context of the 2018 FIFA WC. Sports mega-events, however, do not always shore up regimes' popularity, as was recently the case in Russia, but could also precipitate the fall of an incumbent autocratic government, as happened a year before the 1988 Seoul Olympics in South Korea (Radchenko, 2012). Therefore, it would be reasonable to conduct a comparative investigation of how and why the Sochi Olympics (and the 2018 FIFA WC?) consolidated Putin's power as opposed to the Moscow Olympics, which are perceived as a significant factor in hastening the collapse of Communist rule.

Whilst initially this study set out to trace the domestic idiosyncrasies of the national narrative, that is identity reconstruction in Russia, it revealed significant interdependence and indivisibility of Russian and Western identities. Both consider each other as their inalienable, albeit currently antagonistic Other. This binary co-construction/opposition is for now mostly limited to the discursive sphere especially manifest in the bitter reciprocal media attacks, with the USA criticisms turning more ferocious on the eve of the Sochi Olympics and not losing momentum ever since. Tsygankov (2017, p.20), for example, having analysed the leading US media outlets and speeches by politicians, concludes that similar to the Cold War era, when the USA ‘defined itself through the Soviet ‘‘other", nowadays, ‘US elites are failing the test of inventing a new national identity free of comparisons with the former enemy'. As a result, it

appears that the USA is treading on a dangerous and slippery ground, in that it internalises an identity that is not premised on some essential positive features pertinent to American society, but that is primitively anti-Russian. This makes it embarrassingly similar to the festering imbroglio in Ukraine, the whole nationhood of which is predicated on the rejection of Moscow (Sakwa, 2015; Hörhager, 2016). Both cases are hardly examples of a constructive national idea.

The USA sees Russia not simply as the successor state of the USSR but as the USSR under another name. ‘Russia' means for them only an unsuccessful and sanctimonious rebranding attempt, and however distressing the present impasse with the Kremlin might be, the irony is that it is also rather relieving because it eventually spares the Americans the trouble of having to learn about new Russia. Historically, the USA needed a real enemy, a very credible threat, ideally Russia, to confirm them in their exclusive, endearing and so gratifying identity. Bad Russia, above all, is a very convenient enemy in the collective memory of the US population. This implies that the USA once again has what it takes to obliterate it, by analogy with the Soviet Union, preferably discursively, by professing the superiority and undisputed righteousness of its values. Clearly, the Soviet Union was a foe, to fight which symbolically and ideologically took a tremendous amount of material resources, but unlike the armed conflicts the USA has got itself into in the 21st century, did not claim lives.

Whereas some historians suggest that Russia follows path dependency, whereby the strategic decisions of the present only repeat the successful ones of the past and its ‘past national "self" forms a historical reference point in elite evaluations of current competing national self-images' (Clunan, 2014, p.282), the USA is not much different. Despite significant changes which have taken place in Russia since 1991, the American public continues to see it within the same old framework and synthesises a ‘narrative about contemporary Russia as a neo-

Soviet autocracy' (Tsygankov, 2017, p.19). For that reason, Russia's SP proposition, when contrasted to that of the US, only helps to support the entrenched binary opposition: evil/virtuous, corrupt/honourable, archaic/modern, primitive/cultured, etc. It appears, therefore, that it was the Sochi Olympics as Russia's biggest SP party to date, not the aftermath, which, not least through a transformative attendant media response/framing from both sides, became the closing chapter of Russia-USA interdependent identity construction in the early 21st century. Naturally, SP of the United States equally depends on 'othering' Russia, and, therefore, Russia's SP from now on is doomed to tenacious resistance and counteraction of the former.

This study appears to be the first academic attempt to address both external and internal political objectives of SME hosting in Russia. It draws attention to important continuities between the sport system of the Soviet Union and of modern Russia. As in the USSR, sport in Russia is political and is a nation-defining institution. This study attempted to show where Russia stands in the hierarchy of SME hosts in terms of their motivations and aims. By doing so, it also attempted to contribute to an understanding of the SMEs role in the post-modern world and broaden the framework of SME research beyond the Western neo-liberal paradigmatic hegemony. Whilst this research was a case study of SMEs hosting in Russia, it allowed for an in-depth investigation of the phenomena and a nuanced understanding of it. However, this fact also conditioned some limitations of this thesis. First, the findings in this study are based on a relatively small participant sample and are representative of one specific context, which is the aftermath of the Sochi Olympics. Second, as was previously acknowledged in chapter 5, the author understood that it was not possible to conduct an entirely value-free research. Although the author tried to take stock of all her personal views and judgements, they, as well as the fact that the findings were a result of the researcher's

interaction with respondents and her analysis of their experiences, might present a limitation to this study. Third, the findings of this study, whilst contextualised within the scope of the SMEs research, are not generalisable to other contexts. To conclude, each of this thesis findings could potentially represent a highly illuminating topic for further investigation, which will help to shed light on Russia's identity and interests. SMEs hosting is very nuanced and, therefore, each particular host in the future should be analysed separately, taking into account its own specific context, motivations and frame of reference.

APPENDIX A: Participant Information Sheet

N. Kramareva: Political and Ideological Goals behind Sports Mega-Event hosting in Russia.

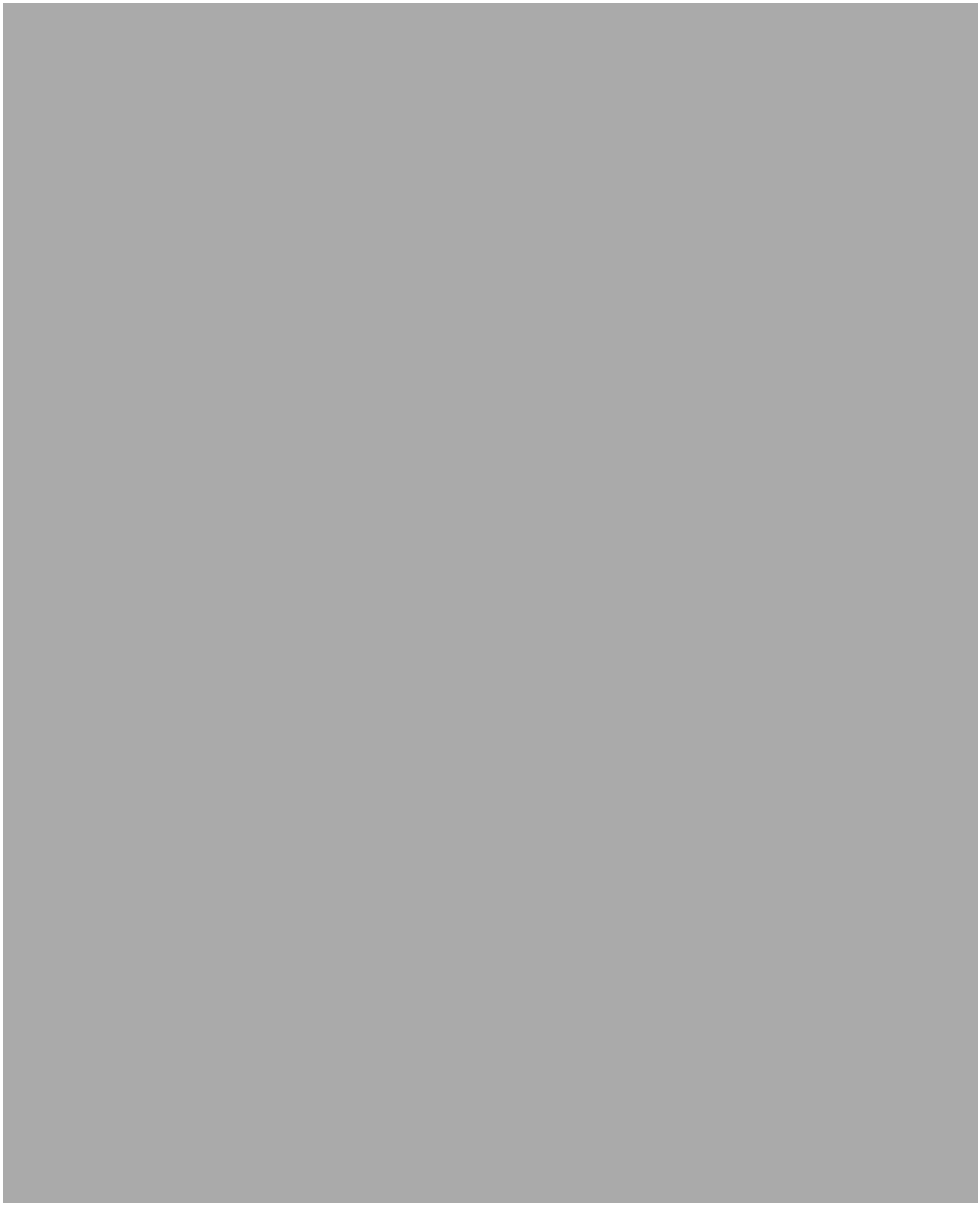
Participation Information Sheet:

This information sheet explains the purpose of this study as well as the role and involvement of the participant. Please take time to read this information sheet and then if you are still happy to participate in the study, please sign the consent form attached to this document.

Purpose of study:

This project seeks to understand the hoped-for legacies of sports mega-events in so-called non-liberal states. While there are apparent differences in the goals for hosting mega-events, depending on the level of a country's development and the type of political system they possess, there is a bias in the evaluation of events that would appear to favour 'western' countries. Little has been written on those states considered 'non-liberal' and little evidence exists on the views of less developed states. Russia's 2014 Sochi Olympics would appear unique compared to previous hosts and how they use such events insofar as it prioritised questions of national identity and pursued a policy of drumming up domestic support. This study is an attempt to gain a more holistic overview of the mega-event hosting strategies in Russia.

APPENDIX B: Consent Form



APPENDIX C: Interview Questions for Participants in Russia

Interview questions for the participants in Russia:

1. What did Russian leadership seek to achieve via hosting the 2014 Sochi Olympics?
2. How did Russia seek to position itself in the eyes of international audience through hosting the 2014 Sochi Olympics?
3. How was the Sochi Olympics to benefit Russian society in the future?
4. How different were the messages sent to the international and domestic audience in course of hosting the 2014 Sochi Olympics?
5. What role (if any) do SMEs play in the construction of a new Russian national identity?
6. What are the foundations of a new Russian national identity?
7. What do you consider to be the main intangible legacy of the Sochi Olympics?
8. Do you think that the Sochi Olympics achieved the main aims set before them by the leadership?
9. How do you think the world sees Russia- in soft or hard power terms?
10. Do you see any similarities/ continuity between the 1980 Moscow Olympics and the 2014 Sochi Olympics in terms of geopolitical controversies surrounding them?

APPENDIX D: Interview Questions for Participants in Ukraine

The interview questions for the participants in Ukraine:

1. How do you think, what did Russian leadership seek to achieve via hosting the 2014 Sochi Olympics?
2. How do you think, how did Russia seek to position itself in the eyes of international audience through hosting the 2014 Sochi Olympics?
3. How do you think, was the Sochi Olympics to benefit Russian society in the future?
4. How different were the messages sent to the international and domestic audience in course of hosting the 2014 Sochi Olympics?
5. How do you think, what role (if any) do SMEs play in the construction of a new Russian national identity?
6. How do you think, what are the foundations of a new Russian national identity?
7. What do you consider to be the main intangible legacy of the Sochi Olympics?
8. Do you think that the Sochi Olympics achieved the main aims set before them by the leadership?
9. How do you think the world sees Russia- in soft or hard power terms?
10. Do you see any similarities/ continuity between the 1980 Moscow Olympics and the 2014 Sochi Olympics in terms of geopolitical controversies surrounding them?

APPENDIX E: Interview Transcript with Interviewee 1

Interview with: Interviewee 1

Date: 04.11.2016

Interviewer: Nina Kramareva

N: Why do you think Russia pursues such events as the 2014 Sochi Olympics and the upcoming 2018 FIFA WC? What are the main goals of the leadership?

VP: We much take into account two time periods here: the year of the Sochi Games, 2014, is a watershed moment. The goal behind the Sochi Olympics was to increase Russia's international prestige, to represent the country on the international arena as the one which has achieved success economically, in the social sphere. If we look at the organisation of the FIFA WC the target audience has changed here. As regretful as it is the whole rhetoric will be closely linked to the political events, events in Ukraine. I think the goal from now on will be to prove that Russia despite all the pressures is respected and allowed to take part in the international social life through the hosting of mega events. After the Sochi Games and the Crimean affair mega events will be seen as a major vehicle of international communication.

N: Don't you think in this respect that Ukrainian revolution was somehow too closely linked to the Olympics? Don't you see that the time for it was chosen precisely to coincide with the Russian Olympics?

VP: I think it would have been too intricate a conspiracy. But I would agree with you on one thing – the Ukrainian events took most of the positive attention from Russia. Hardly had it ended when it became trivial and not exiting for the world anymore. Crimea and Ukraine got all the attention. They became the main topics in the media.

N: Don’t you think then that the Ukrainian revolution was supposed to happen at the same time with the Olympics so that Putin wouldn’t dare to interfere in Ukraine for fear of losing the Olympic image and SP benefits?

VP: I doubt that. In Russia the Olympic Games are almost sacred, they get much more attention than elsewhere. The Olympics Games are not viewed as such a political instrument in the West. In Russia, on the contrary, sports politics and sport successes are a sore question both for the nation and for the leadership, the links with politics are regularly emphasised.

N: Why do you think Russia is so different from the rest of the world in this respect? Why are sport and mega events so important?

VP: Well, for the leadership sport is an instrument of mass consciousness consolidation. There is a direct link with the Soviet legacy evident here. How were the sports successes positioned and framed? They were positioned as achievements of the state and of the nation. This psychological mechanism, I think, is being used in modern Russia show that sports victories are the most important thing. It doesn’t matter much that there is a crisis, that the economy is stagnating. The main thing is sports victories. I asked my students at the Academy of Governance, why is it so. And their answer was that Russian football victories are the most important thing. They didn’t care for the low salaries, that the currency is weak. The most important was for the Russian squad to win. And such a psychological substitution mechanism is actively deployed by the elite and it is an unfailing mechanism. There is a return to great power consciousness taking place through sport. It has been happening for the last ten years. There was an ideological abyss in the 90’s. There was neither money nor any interests. Since the 2000’s there came financing and an understanding that this sphere could be useful if not for manipulating the nation then for the consolidation of patriotism, for

nation-building, for the cultivation of national consciousness. There is a great interest to sports in Russia and in comparison to other countries, I would say, unparalleled. We could compare it only to what happens in China.

N: Do you think that the messages addressed to the international and domestic audience were any different?

VP: I think that in the official discourse there was no difference. I and my team looked at the framing and agenda setting in the government controlled sites and it was pretty much homogenous. It was chiefly great power rhetoric. In the social media and in the independent media the discourse was more realistic; there was a diversification of views which is characteristic of an open, democratic society. The varying view can exist creating polyphony. I don't see the difference in messages. There was a substantially different framing in the Western media but the Russian media addressed both domestic and international audience pretty much in the same way.

N: Don't you think that the great power rhetoric might intimidate the West? And don't you get the feeling that in the aftermath of the Sochi Olympics an increasingly as the FIFA WC draws closer there has been an intensification of militant patriotic rhetoric? There are calls for militant patriotic consolidation in the air… This is evident from the military terms used in the coverage of the sports events.

VP: I would say that this tendency of militarisation is characteristic not only of the Olympics; it is rather an overall tendency of militarisation of the information sphere in view of the unstable and hostile international environment. There is a return to the hard power terminology. We have tested SP during the Sochi Games and we did quite successfully but then came Crimea. If there hadn't been for Crimea the views of the Olympics would have

been more balanced, but in view of the Crimean affair there was no need any more to delve into the Games. And the image of Russia instantly got a negative colouring.

N: Analysing all mentioned events in Russia what do you think prevails on the government agenda: hard power challenges or SP ambitions?

VP: I think the goal is to see what happens next. Both mechanisms are being used, hard power mechanisms have been used more extensively in the last two years. For the prestige purposes, although national patriotic consolidation seems much more important in Russia than any other considerations, SP politics have to remain on the agenda. Therefore Russia seeks to be a full-fledged participant on the sports arena and a proud host of mega events. Even if we look at doping – it was used as a prohibited, dirty instrument to achieve victories, prove our superiority and accordingly project SP. All is fair in love and war, I would say.

N: It appears that Russia went to great lengths to show itself as a reliable international partner, to promote its SP and exactly when it gets ever close to making its SP mechanisms work some unforeseen developments come about which require Russian interference and deployment of hard power? If we take Afghanistan in 1979 the structural conditions were such that Russia was forced to interfere…

VP: In Crimea Russia has extolled the best possible benefits. Yet it could have behaved differently, taking into account possible sanctions, worsening of diplomatic relations. However, the choice was made in favor of hard power.

N: Do you think there was any coherent Russian identity and envisioned future projected to the international audience via these Olympics? Are there any important messages about us?

VP: Yes! Exactly in Sochi there were these slogans… innovation and seven other important principles of the Olympics which were future-oriented. They included sustainable development, ecology protection, and technology. The turn was to the ecology protection. The emphasis was on strong and modern, state-of-the-art Russia which takes care of its ecology and nature.

N: Some of my interviewees said on the contrary, that what future vision could there be if the whole opening ceremony was built around archaic symbols. Although there was not much of the Soviet period there, it was a journey through history with no emphasis on the future. The only obscure symbols of the future were mothers with prams.

VP: There was also a factory shown in the beginning of the ceremony with Nikita Michalkov and a lady in high heels. This was a symbol of modern technology development. The message was that Russia is a modern, rapidly developing country, so there was a modernisation theme. However, I would agree that tradition was preeminent in the representation of Russia during the Olympics. Yet modernisation was a centrepiece of this representation even throughout the historical part of the ceremony. There was a modernisation angle to the whole ceremony. If we take a closer look, there were locomotives and Gagarin, a space theme and industrialisation…

N: As we mentioned future and tradition, let's speak about a national idea in Russia. Is there such and what role do mega events play in the formulation of it?

VP: The central facets of the national idea are that Russia is a strong and great country. There are efforts being made to build an image of a strong and successful, modernised country. The emphasis is on the idea that Russia is capable and entitled to take its own strategic decisions.

This is an important element which was lost in the 90's. The emphasis is on sovereignty and independence.

N: What are the values and foundations which would be clear to an ordinary citizen? And is there a place for sport?

VP: We surveyed people in Samara and St Petersburg during the Olympics and the impressions were very different. The reason for frustration was corruption. So corruption is an inalienable symbol of Russia. And on the other hand, there are victories which matter. Not only sports victories but they are also highly important. The symbolism of victory takes its roots from the sacred place of May 9th, the Victory Day, and sports victories fit very well into such a national myth. We won the Great Patriotic War, we won in space, and we are winning in sport. Victory is a foundation, the greatest value for an identity of a modern Russian person.

N: In this respect, do mega events play a role in the formation of the Hero of Our Times in Russia? What characteristics are particular to him? Is there an idealised social type?

VP: An ideal Russian citizen is a patriot who loves Putin. This is an ideal Person. Who does everything he is being told and believes in everything he is being told. Anybody who questions the official rhetoric, the official course is not an ideal citizen.

N: This is an ideal person for the leadership. But let's speak about the types popular among Russian people?

VP: The youth wants to hold government posts and to be rich. Now they are intertwined. You can't be rich and not linked to the government.

N: Yet this is not an ideal type. It is not a virtuous type. Isn't an athlete among those types? Judging from the films being released in Russia sport heroes and their life stories seems to be a very popular topic…

VP: I can't say about the perception of this image but I can definitely say that that type of the athlete hero, persevering through the hardships and overcoming himself is being constructed. An image of an athlete is being added to the official ideal type discourse. Yet I can't tell what kind of sport he represents. Maybe he should come from hockey as it is particularly loved in Russia. Although football is the most popular sport we are not as successful in it. Yes, it should be a hockey player or biathlon competitor, a figure skater. Success in sport gives an unofficial admission into political elite. Former elite athletes are often choosing political career. And sport successes become appreciated in Russia as well. I think girls will increasingly choose to practice figure skating and gymnastics now.

N: There is a certain heroisation of a Paralympian taking place taking into account films dedicated to them and the Games organised in Russia for the Paralympians to compensate them for the Rio Games. What do you consider to be the main intangible and tangible legacy of the Sochi Games?

VP: Well, the tangible legacy is infrastructure and sports facilities which are being used after Sochi. Efforts are being made to prevent them from turning into white elephants. On the other hand, it is the money spent on the Games; nobody knows how much, which means that this money didn't go into other spheres. This is also a tangible legacy. Intangible legacy is a surge of patriotism and enthusiasm especially among the youths. Whereas the older generation was a bit skeptical, the youth was ecstatic about its co-ownership over this event. Nevertheless, I would say that there is a big disappointment because the Olympics were expected to bring an

enormous worldwide recognition of Russia's achievement. Yet the further events such as the doping scandal compromise all previous Russia's achievements. They raise questions about Russia's capacity to play by the international rules.

N: Thank you very much for your interview!

APPENDIX F: Interviews

Having decided to use interviews in this study the author made sure that she satisfied five following essential and routine requirements (Roulston, 2013):

1. ***Ensure that interview data are well suited to examination of the research questions posed and consider criteria for sampling and participant selection.*** In view of the author's interpretivist stance and the primary interest in semiotics of SMEs diplomacy and the role of SMEs in identity building in Russia and interpretations thereof by one of the target audiences (Ukraine), in-depth semi-structured interviews have been chosen as the most viable and logical method of data collection. To obtain answers to research questions the author intended to conduct a series of semi-structured interviews with the sample members. Unlike survey-based quantitative studies, were questions follow in strict sequence and from the start there is a coding schema to analyse the answers, semi-structured interviews with their 'undiluted focus on the individual' (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p.36) envisage a free-flowing conversation with a view to generate varying and personal interpretations of the same phenomenon of inquiry. This is the essence of 'etic or 'insider' descriptions of lifeworlds' and the reason why in-depth interviews became the main method of data collection in this project (Roulston, 2013, p.1). They are also the most appropriate method for collecting data from the 'very busy study groups' (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003) which was an integral characteristic of this research sample.

   The most widespread source of generated data in qualitative research, semi-structured interviews can take form of 'phenomenological, ethnographic, feminist, oral, and life history interviews' depending on the research problems and design (Roulston, 2013,

p.1). Akin to the purposes of most of the qualitative interviews, which strive to dig up individual experiences, understandings, tacit knowledge and values which are brought to bear on the phenomenon of inquiry (Bryman, 2012), and falling back on phenomenological tradition, the author first and foremost sought 'detailed subject coverage' (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p.36) and attendant interpretations. Moreover, in order to elicit more than a simple account and expose 'meanings people attribute to their experiences and social worlds' (Miller and Glassner, 1997, p.100), the author became what Roulston (2013) calls an active, though 'neutral co-researcher' and attempted to facilitate an honest, unrestricted conversation while withholding personal opinion. In this way the author addressed the exploratory orientation of this project and tapped into 'all the factors that underpin participants' answers: reasons, feelings, opinions and beliefs' (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p. 141). Because there is the comparative component in this study, which lies in 'exploring how the reasons for, or explanations of, phenomena, or their different impacts and consequences, vary between groups' (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p.50), the author envisaged to hold interviews both in Ukraine and in Russia. For that reason, the issues of time and money constraints have also been given due regard in the process of defining a sample size and, thus, a number of projected interviews. Being a self-funded researcher, the author also had to make the most effective use of costs incurred as a result of travelling between the UK, Ukraine and Russia during conducting fieldwork. Although nowadays there are multiple ways to do interviews distantly, the benefits of conducting face to face interviews in this case outweighed the costs. Legard *et al*. (2003) see 'physical encounter as an essential context for an interview', which allows for the meaning and context to be deciphered.

2. ***Develop an interview guide with questions aligned with the interview tradition selected.*** The author has devised an interview guide congenial with the research objectives. The interview guide consisted of 10 questions. The questions were almost identical in meaning both for the Russian and Ukrainian side, though some were differently worded taking into account the specificities of the political environment between the two states and a delicate nature of research. Therefore, somewhat linguistic 'customisation' was reasonable to avoid any cognitive dissonance, defensiveness and hostility on the part of interviewees. To that end, the author also conducted two pilot interviews with her peers, which triggered a number of possible follow-up probes and helped to improve and amend some questions to simplify understanding and avoid possible awkwardness during actual interviews. Overall, the author decided to follow a commonplace procedure for semi-structured interviews where:

> …the interviewer asks questions in the same way each time and does some probing for further information, but this probing is more limited than in unstructured, in-depth interviews (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p.111).

While the qualitative study is iterative by nature, the author intended to analyse data as it emerged. First and foremost it was illustrated by the continuous revision and re-evaluation of questions, their sequence, wording, etc. This process was logically to end when the list of themes were exhausted, thus rendering further interviews futile.

3. ***Gain approval for human subjects' research and consider ethical issues.*** Because of the cultural discord and prolonged political tensions between Russia and Ukraine the author had to take particular care of the ethical issues during my research. There are basically four issues which have to be considered during the interview-based research. They are:

a) Reducing the risk of unanticipated harm;
b) Protecting the interviewee's information;
c) Collectively informing interviewees about the nature of the study, and
d) Reducing the risk of exploitation (adopted from DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006, p.319).

With regard to the data protection, the author fully realised that because of the nature of the study, maintaining anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents was critical as they were most likely to 'share information that could jeopardise his or her position in a system' (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006, p.319). Since participation was negotiated on an individual basis and the sampling materials were to be stored separately from the interview data, the possibility of disclosure of personal details to a third party was almost circumvented. To 'foul the identity trail' of the interviewees the author assigned them with pseudonyms and took utmost care to safeguard the data in the process of analysis, transcription of interviews and write-up stage. The author also made arrangements for securely storing the data during her travels and while working with it, in that it was password-protected and the author's supervisor and the author were the only people who had an access to it.

Prior to the interviews the author made it known that the quotations were going to be used in the project report, albeit it would be not possible to attribute any of them. To vouch for the confidentiality of informants the author was prepared to change minor details, generalise or get a specific permission to use a comment (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). For the purposes of diminishing the risk of involuntary, yet possible, exploitation and to inflict no harm whatsoever on the participants while also leaving them content with taking part in the study, the author assured them that they will be

provided with interview transcripts for proof-reading and receive a final copy of findings report. While reviewing the author's ethics form the Committee has brought to attention the recommendations of the Commonwealth Office against travelling to certain areas in Ukraine and Russia due to the armed conflict there. Although the author had no intention to go to the specified regions and the interviews were to take place in Kiev and Moscow this had to be clearly stated in the form to provide for the safety of the researcher.

4. ***Recruit participants and schedule interviews.*** With respect to the snowball recruitment of the participants, each interview was scheduled on an individual basis in the location and on time which suited the interviewee most. Conversations were audio-recorded and downloaded to the researcher's personal computer at the University of Birmingham to be later transcribed. Attending to the needs of the informant, arguably (Noy, 2008, p.334), improves 'the quality of the referring process'. Thus, in order not to get stuck at the apprehension stage but earn the participant's 'trust and sympathy' and proceed to the co-operation and participation stages (Spradley, 1979), the author followed a number of steps. For the sake of getting an interview appointment, explaining this research and formally introducing herself the author sent each potential participant an e-mail. In that way the author also addressed the remaining ethical issues of informing participants about their rights. To establish rapport during an encounter (Maxwell, 1996) the author also took some time to get to know each interviewee's biography and their current job description (Douglas, 1985, DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006).

   Even though that ideally the author would have aimed to get more than 'facts and descriptions from participants', she realised that a string of circumstances would

potentially stand in the way of 'engaging participants in critical discussion with a focus of challenging or transforming participants' understandings (Freeman, 2006; Brinkmann, 2007 in Roulston, 2013, p.6). Such circumstances included Russia's conceptual 'isolation' from the dominant understanding of SMEs hosting and their imaginable ensemble of 'soft' legacies as well as the author's Ukrainian nationality. As a result, the research relationships and referring process were bound to be influenced by the structure of the political milieu, which could have easily exacerbated the following issue accurately described by Noy (2002 in Noy, 2008, 334-5):

> ….both parties partaking in the interview do not necessarily frame the meeting in the same way. At stake here is not a simple misunderstanding which can be easily resolved during the conversation, but rather a hermeneutic discord, which concerns a lack of mutual dialogical acknowledgement (Harding, 1987; Luft, 1999; Noy, 2004; Stromberg, 1999). Such instances illustrate the famous Geertzian 'double hermeneutic framework' (Geertz, 1983), wherein informants and researchers see the enaction of their interactions- and for that matter, many other social sites and cultural events as well- quite differently, in accordance with different ideologies they hold and interests they have. This disparity does not usually surface in the participants' awareness and goes unnoticed by researcher as well as by informants.

Thus, during actual interviews the author decided to avoid demonstrating her personal views and values so as to reduce the significance or minimise the intensity of potential differences.

APPENDIX G: Transcription

Once the author has collected enough interviews to reach a point of thematic saturation she moved on to the transcription process and was faced with a dilemma of which approach to follow (Bowen, 2008). The process of transcribing interviews basically means 'the word-for-word reproduction of verbal data, where the written words are the exact replication of the audiorecorded words' (Halcomb and Davidson, 2006). Following in the footsteps of the Poland (2002) and Tilley (1998) who were the first to draw attention to the importance of transcription, Oliver *et al*. (2005, p. 1273) argue that it should not be seen as a behind-the-scenes auxiliary procedure, but rather a 'powerful act of representation' and one of the moments of truth in research. Furthermore, they suggest that in addition to making a decision regarding which approach to transcription to take, a researcher has to be reflective, whereby he/she evaluates 'transcription decisions and the possible impacts these decisions may have on participants and research outcomes' (Oliver *et al*. 2005, p. 1273-1274).

There are two distinct approaches to transcribing the data- naturalism and denaturalism- which could be placed at the different ends of the continuum based on their underpinning philosophies and, as a result, attention to detail in the data (Edwards, 2001; Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998, Ochs, 1979). The choice of a transcription approach is thus affected by one's philosophical assumptions as well as by the research objectives (Fairclough, 1993). In this case the author opted for denaturalism. In contrast to naturalism, where language is considered to be the depiction of the real world, it supposes that it is the meanings and perceptions inherent in speech that shape our reality (Cameron, 2001). Denaturalised transcription, therefore, is in perfect compliance with social constructivism as a philosophical basis of this investigation. In practice, while naturalism endeavours to preserve as much detail as possible, denaturalism means that in the process of transcription all idiosyncratic elements

of speech (e.g. stutters, pauses, non-verbals, involuntary vocalisations) are removed' (Oliver *et al*. 2005, p. 1273-1274). The attention is to the perceptions as such, not the way they are expressed. Denaturalised transcription, consequently, was well suited for this research and grounded theory research in general, while it is for the most part committed to discovering the context and tacit meaning conveyed through speech (Charmaz, 2003).

One of the arguments in favour of naturalism is that when original and precise structure of the speech is maintained in its presentation, the effect of bias and the researcher's system of meaning is diminished in the analysis. To hard-line proponents of naturalism, it makes sense applying analytical scrutiny and theoretical filters only to the data presented in such a format (Schegloff, 1997). Naturalism can, however, have an opposite effect when it leads to prejudiced assumptions, sociocultural, ethnic and class discrimination etc., in cases, for example, when these constructs can be inferred from the transcript (Jaffe and Walton, 2000; Preston, 1992). This could also possibly jeopardise not only the integrity of one's study but also harm the participants in that their identities could be rendered non-confidential. Furthermore, transcribing interviews using naturalised approach could have resulted in my participants being offended or hurt when presented with a transcript as part of a member-checking procedure, which contained all their vocalisations, reflected accents, etc. Bearing in mind a suggestion for reflexivity, denaturalised transcription was above all conducted out of respect for the interviewees (Tilley, 1998). The fact that the author resorted to thematic analysis when working with the data, with its focus on recurring themes and patterns instead of the mechanics of speech, also meant that verbatim transcription preserving all idiosyncrasies was to no avail (Halcomb and Davidson, 2006).

APPENDIX H: Sampling Design

As soon as the methods were decided upon the researcher faced a dilemma of selecting an appropriate sampling design, which encompassed a choice of the target population to investigate and ways of accessing it (sample scheme and size) (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Sampling, while both a juncture between a theoretical and empirical part of research and its crucial link, is rarely given due attention to in qualitative studies due to the absence of clear guidelines to follow. Noy (2008, p.328), therefore, describes the sampling process as 'cruel moments within the overall research design; moments where the type of contact between the researcher(s) and informants is conceptualised – to be later embodied'.

To achieve a holistic, balanced non-linear perspective stemming from contrasting opinions and views, the author sought respondents with presumably varying attitudes and beliefs and divergent political and ideological affiliations. Accordingly, by interviewing both confirming and disconfirming sample the author to an extent attempted to provide the research with immunity to lack of objectivity criticisms.

To 'broaden the scope of research' (Bryman, 2012, p. 428) and in view of the high status of the interviewees and, thus, difficulty of gaining access to them and their limited availability, the author had to make use of snowball sampling technique, whereby the author set out with approaching and interviewing a limited number of sports officials (key informant sample) (Marshall, 1996), who brought her into contact with other individuals with expertise in this research area and compliant with the sampling criteria. The essence of this type of sampling is characterised by Noy (2008, p.330):

> A sampling procedure may be defined as snowball sampling when the researcher accesses informants through the contact information that is provided by other informants. This process is by necessity, repetitive: informants refer the researcher to other informants who are contacted by the researcher and then refer her or him to yet

> other informants, and so on. Hence, the evolving 'snowball' effect captured in the metaphor that touches on the central quality of this sampling procedure: it's accumulating (diachronic and dynamic) procedure.

The snowball sampling was above all else a matter of exigency considering the specificities of the Russian and Ukrainian bureaucracy and overall mentality. In other words, contacts there are normally made by personal recommendation and reference. In the first place, yet, it was imperative because of the delicate nature of the issues researched as a result of ensuing controversial and unfavourable political background to Russian sport and its foreign policy in general. Abnormally strained diplomatic relations and ideological tensions between Russia and Ukraine in the aftermath of the Sochi Olympics were estimated to take quite a toll on this research. Given the current uneasy political milieu between the two states and the ostracism Russia faces internationally, membership of the potential interview candidates in the state apparatus and involvement in strategic decision making, albeit made these 'informants ''richer'' than others and…. more likely to provide insight and understanding' (Marshall, 1996, p.523), was also expected to complicate an interview negotiating procedure and affect the potential candidates' willingness if not to speak on the issues as such then to be open about their personal opinions on them. Therefore, while snowball sampling is traditionally used to get access to marginalised members of society, the author, under the circumstances, employed it to as a means of entry to the members at the opposite end of the society spectrum. Noy (2008, p.330-331), speaking of instances of applicability of this type of 'respondent-driven' sampling (Heckathorn, 1997) congruent with this case, argues:

> occasionally, snowball sampling is also used to access groups that do not suffer from stigmas and marginalization, but, to the contrary, enjoy the status of social elites (Moyser and Wagstaffe, 1987). In these cases, on which I shall elaborate later, people are ''hidden-by-choice'' as it were. They are not excluded by hegemonic forces, but, but being part of the hegemony, exclude themselves from the public.

In order to answer a research question, which is the main standard for the optimal sample size, it has to meet two following requirements. An appropriate sample size does not have to be too big as it will make problematic an extraction of 'thick, rich data' (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2007, p.242). At the same time, data saturation would not be possible when the sample is not sufficient. The point of theoretical saturation alone, after which further purposively sampled interviews stop bringing up new themes (Sandelowski, 1995; Byrne, 2001; Guest *et al.*, 2006), also often determines the size of the sample in qualitative research. Although there are no particular guidelines on what constitutes a sufficient nonprobabilistic sample, Bertaux (1981) suggests that it has to be no smaller than fifteen interviews. For the current study the author found Kuzel's (1992, p.41) approach to be the most appropriate. According to it a sample has to be above all else defined by the research aims and based on the homogeneity of informants. If case a group of informants is homogenous, six to eight interviews will suffice. When a maximum variation and disconfirming evidence is preferable - a sample should consist between twelve to twenty interviews.

While deciding upon the main criterion for the sample size, the author followed the rule of thumb in qualitative research, namely the achievement of the saturation point. Facing the difficulty of estimating the size of the sample at the outset of the fieldwork due to being initially unaware about the exact number of required subjects, the author, by hunch, sought to aim at 15-17 interviews. For the purposes of comparison, ten out of twenty interviews were to be conducted with the Russian side, while the other 6-7 were to take place with Ukrainian representatives (in the end the author conducted 13 interviews with Russian nationals and 7 with Ukrainian officials). The author was also guided by the Crouch and McKenzie (2006) logic, who claimed that the sample of fewer than twenty provide a researcher with an opportunity of an intimate involvement with the interviewees and, as a result, to obtain

exquisite, illustrative information. Thus, data collection reached a point of saturation as the study progressed and when the author became ‘empirically confident’ that no new information was elicited (Glaser and Strauss, 1965, p.65).

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